Management Review Quarterly (2026) 76:333–369
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-024-00472-7

ORIGINAL PAPER

Empathy in leadership: a systematic literature review on the effects of empathetic leaders in organizations

Caroline Muss[1] · **Dana Tüxen**[1] · **Bärbel Fürstenau**[1]

Received: 14 March 2024 / Accepted: 29 October 2024 / Published online: 22 January 2025
© The Author(s) 2024

Abstract

Numerous studies have examined the impact of empathetic leaders in organizations. However, the systematic consolidation and categorization of these effects have not yet been conducted. This article presents a systematic literature review of 42 academic studies, carefully selected from 5 databases using a rigorous search process, with the aim of developing a concise category system that synthesizes the effects of empathetic leaders in organizations. After discussing theoretical lenses and our methodological approach, we outline the various understandings of empathy and the measuring instruments used in the analyzed articles. As our main contribution, we then describe nine categories that summarize the effects of empathetic leaders in organizations. These categories consider affect, attitudes, empathy, equity, interpersonal relationships, leadership practice, perception, performance, and well-being. We further outline the individuals or groups affected by these effects. Finally, we discuss our results and offer future research avenues for the scientific community as well as practical recommendations for three different stakeholders who can shape empathetic leadership in organizations: leaders, human resources (HR) managers, and board members.

Keywords Empathy · Leadership · Empathetic leaders · Effects · Categorization · Systematic literature review

JEL Classification M10 · M12

✉ Caroline Muss
caroline.muss@tu-dresden.de

[1] Chair of Business Education and Management Training, Faculty of Business and Economics, TUD Dresden University of Technology, Dresden, Germany

1 Introduction

What makes a good leader? This question has long been debated in organizational science and continues to be a prominent topic in current research (e.g., Förster et al. 2022; Joseph et al. 2015; Newstead et al. 2021). In addition, helpful guidance on strong leadership can be found in various popular science management publications (e.g., Hunter 2004; Klann 2007; Maxwell 2014; Stern 2019). In relation to the question of what it takes to be a good leader, several authors (e.g., Gentry et al. 2015; Holt and Marques 2012) highlight empathy as a crucial leadership skill. Leaders who demonstrate empathy are highly valued for their ability to support employees facing contemporary challenges, such as a fast-paced work environment or changing work practices, by being sensitive to their thoughts and feelings and responding appropriately (e.g., Miranda 2021; Weidenbach 2021). There seems to be a consensus that empathetic leaders are associated with a wide range of effects, most of which are constructive (Holt and Marques 2012). Some studies provide insights into these effects; however, there is currently no systematic overview of the various research results. For this reason, this article will conduct a systematic literature review to compare the variety of research findings and investigate the effects attributed to empathy in leadership. Our aim is to systematize empirically proven effects of empathetic leaders in order to ascertain their usefulness.

To guide our systematic literature review, we formulated one main research question (MRQ) as follows:

MRQ What effects are associated with empathetic leaders in organizations?

In addition, we formulated several affiliated sub-research questions (SRQs):

SRQ 1 Who is affected by empathetic leadership?

SRQ 2 How do the authors of the included studies conceptualize the construct of empathy?

SRQ 3 How do the authors of the included studies measure empathy?

In the following section, we start with clarifying the understanding of some basic concepts. After, we describe in detail the methodology applied for selecting studies. Then, we present a descriptive analysis of our results outlining general sample characteristics, such as the studies' years of publication, journals, and numbers of citations. We further give a content-related synthesis and, in particular, develop a category system summarizing the retrieved effects associated with empathetic leaders in order to provide the currently missing systematic overview. Following that, we discuss our main findings, also acknowledging the limitations of our study. We finally conclude by highlighting both future research avenues and managerial recommendations.

2 Theoretical insights

2.1 Empathy

Empathy lacks a standardized scientific definition and is approached in various ways, each with different emphases. For instance, McNeely and Meglino (1994, p. 837) define empathy as "one's sensitivity to the emotional experiences of another," emphasizing the affective link between the empathizing individual and his or her counterpart. Another definition describes empathy as the ability to put oneself in another individual's position in order to adopt a change of perspective (Aronson et al. 2008), focusing on the cognitive effort of the empathizing individual. This article is oriented toward Clark et al.'s (2019) understanding of empathy, which is based on a multidimensional perspective. According to the authors, three different components together contribute to the construct of empathy: cognitive, affective, and behavioral ones (Clark et al. 2019). The cognitive component describes, analogous to the given definition from Aronson et al. (2008), the mental involvement with someone else's "internal states" (Clark et al. 2019, p. 168) that empathetic individuals seek to comprehend. In contrast, McNeely and Meglino (1994) focus on the affective component in their definition presented above. The affective component goes beyond the mere cognitive confrontation in a way that empathetic individuals share "congruent" (Clark et al. 2019, p. 168) feelings with the ones they are empathizing with. Finally, the behavioral component describes the propensity of empathetic individuals to show "appropriate" (Meinecke and Kauffeld 2018, p. 3) "verbal and nonverbal behaviors" (Clark et al. 2019, p. 169) with the intention of communicating that one has acknowledged the "internal states" (p. 168) of others and that one can relate to their feelings. In the context of this article, and in line with our research interest, we will only focus on leaders in the role of empathetic individuals.

2.2 Leaders, leadership, and empathy

Leaders can be defined as individuals who "are expected to perform (…) leadership" (Yukl 2013, p. 8), whereby leadership is again a "complex, multifaceted phenomenon" (p. 7) that provides a variety of definitions with different emphases. The common denominator of the existing definitions is that "intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization" (Yukl 2013, p. 2) and linked with the goal of accomplishing "shared objectives" (p. 7). Von Rosenstiel (2009, p. 3), for example, also provides a broad approach, defining leadership as the conscious and goal-oriented influencing of people.

Leaders are attributed with various beneficial skills, one of which is empathy (Cornelis et al. 2013; Yukl 2013). While various prominent leadership practices, such as servant leadership (e.g., Barbuto et al. 2014; Barbuto and Wheeler 2006; Graham 1991) or authentic leadership (e.g., Baron and Parent 2015; Novicevic et al. 2006), include empathy as one crucial skill contributing to ethical behavior (Yukl 2013), Kock et al. (2019) have developed a theoretical framework called "empathetic

leadership" that focuses exclusively on the skill of empathy as a central element of leadership. The authors base their work on the multidimensional understanding of empathy presented above: Empathetic leaders are able to cognitively and affectively understand the situations of others and are willing to take care, which result in supportive, valuing, and respectful expressions and actions (Kock et al. 2019). In this regard, Kock et al. (2019) emphasize that the desire, effort made, and resources set aside to invest in empathy may vary from person to person and from situation to situation. However, empathetic leaders are characterized by sincerity, which means that merely pretending to be empathetic is not enough when trying to be an empathetic leader. As a theoretical framework, empathetic leadership integrates the individuals of empathetic leaders into a process (Kock et al. 2019), which is quite similar to process-oriented approaches in general empathy research (e.g., Barrett-Lennard 1981). As a trigger of this process, persons with whom respective empathetic leaders are dealing with in the working context, mostly followers, find themselves in situations that require empathy. These persons actively express their demands, allowing empathetic leaders to observe them. The empathetic leaders are attentive and perceive the persons' need for empathy. As a consequence, they engage in cognitively and affectively understanding their counterparts' situations and actively signal their efforts. These signals reach the other persons, who feel valued. Kock et al. (2019) conclude that empathetic leaders, through the process of empathetic leadership, are able to create positive feelings in their empathy recipients, reduce their workplace-related stress, and increase their job satisfaction, which, in turn, foster job innovation and job performance. With this in mind, the authors already list a number of effects that they associate with empathetic leaders. The present article intends to enrich and expand these findings by conducting a systematic literature review.

3 Methodology

We conducted a systematic literature review in order to answer our research questions. For this purpose, we adopted the methodological procedure suggested by Denyer and Tranfield (2009) and established a three-phase approach ensuring high-quality research through rigor, structure, transparency, and replicability. The three phases comprise planning, study selection, and reporting. In the planning phase, we specified databases and selection criteria, derived keywords, and formulated our research string in order to identify relevant studies. Regarding the study selection, we applied our defined search strategy and obtained our final corpus of studies using a stepwise exclusion process. In the reporting phase, we systematically synthesized and clustered our results.

3.1 Planning phase

To cover a wide intersection of the research fields of management, psychology, and social science, within which we locate our research interest, we decided to use the following databases: Academic Search Elite, APA PsycArticles, APA PsycInfo,

Table 1 Definition of the research string

Keywords	Research String
(1) Empathy	("empath*") AND
(2) Leader	("leader" or "manager" or "supervisor" or "executive") AND
(3) Effect	("effect" or "impact" or "outcome" or "benefit" or "advantage" or "disadvantage" or "importance" or "effectiveness" or "risk" or "challenge" or "pro" or "con")

Business Source Complete, PubMed, and SSOAR. For each of the six databases, we developed an appropriate research string consisting of three major keywords: (1) "empath*," (2) "leader," and (3) "effect," as well as adequate synonyms (see Table 1).

For the keyword of empathy, we decided not to include any synonyms in our research string, as we aimed to include only studies in which the authors themselves explicitly refer to empathy. Thus, all articles that did not mention the keyword empathy were excluded. This way, it is possible to reveal different conceptual understandings the authors may have when allegedly talking about the same construct. As synonyms for "leader," we chose "manager," "supervisor," and "executive." Since we are interested in versatile effects resulting from empathetic leaders, we chose neutral synonyms such as "impact" or "outcome," allowing both positive and negative results. In addition, we also applied synonyms that already give an evaluative direction and that reveal either possible beneficial effects (e.g., "benefit" or "advantage") or bring to light potential disadvantageous effects (e.g., "risk" or "con").

We further formulated inclusion criteria to provide guidance for the study selection process. These inclusion criteria are listed in Table 2.

3.2 Study selection

Based on our defined strategy, we conducted our systematic search in May and June 2023. In each of the selected databases, we searched within the full texts and applied peer-reviewed, academic journal, and the English and German[1] languages as filters. In PubMed, we additionally limited the article type to a classical article, clinical study, comparative study, evaluation study, observational study, or randomized controlled trial. In PubMed as well as in APA PsycInfo, we further chose "Human" as the species respective to the population group. We did not apply any time period specification, which means that we included all relevant articles regardless of their publication dates.

Our initial search yielded $n = 1{,}059$ hits in total. After screening the titles, abstracts, and keywords, we excluded $n = 957$ records due to insufficient fit. From the

[1] German and English language articles are included due to the authors' language skills.

Table 2 Inclusion criteria for the study selection process

Inclusion criteria	Explanations
Empathy	Empathy must be clearly named as such. Different conceptual understandings that appear under the term of empathy are accepted
Leader Empathy	Empathy must originate from leaders, meaning that leaders are the senders of empathy
Leader	A leader is defined as a natural person working in any kind of organization with hierarchically subordinate people called followers
Effects	Studies must report on a direct, indirect, moderating, or mediating effect, which is associated with the leader's empathy. These effects may be positive, neutral, or negative, and they have an influence on different empathy recipients
Empathy Recipients	Empathy recipients include natural persons and legal entities. They "recognize" the leader's empathy and are somehow affected by it. Empathy recipients can be, for example, the leaders themselves, the organization in which the leaders are working, the society, a specific group of people, or any adult natural person ($\geq$ 18 years) who is physically and mentally healthy. Thus, the review specifically excludes those studies that examine the effect of empathy on children or sick people
Study Design	All empirical study designs are included. Quantitative and qualitative empirical research approaches are accepted, while purely conceptual or theoretical approaches are excluded. The studies must be peer-reviewed to ensure validated knowledge

remaining $n = 102$ articles sought for retrieval, $n = 4$ articles could not be accessed and, thus, were excluded as well. From the remaining $n = 98$ articles, we eliminated all duplicates ($n = 14$) and then carefully read the full texts in order to decide whether they contributed to our research questions. To guarantee maximum objectivity, the first two authors independently took the decision of whether the articles should be considered in the final analysis or not. Only in the case of concordant votes were articles included. In the event of discrepancies, a thorough text-based debate was carried out in order to reach a consensus decision. Following this approach and after detailed scrutiny, we excluded $n = 14$ reports since they did not consider leaders. Further articles were omitted as they did not deal with empathy ($n = 4$) or focused on empathy that does not originate from leaders ($n = 8$). We excluded another $n = 5$ articles because they did not address any effects resulting from empathetic leaders. Articles that did not apply quantitative or qualitative empirical research methodologies ($n = 19$) were also omitted, along with another $n = 6$ articles that did not provide any data of interest. At the end of our exclusion process, we finally obtained a sample of $n = 28$ articles for our in-depth analysis. These 28 articles describe a total of 49 studies, of which 42 are relevant to our research questions and are therefore analyzed.

Figure 1 shows a PRISMA flow diagram that displays the process of the identification, extraction, and selection of suitable studies.

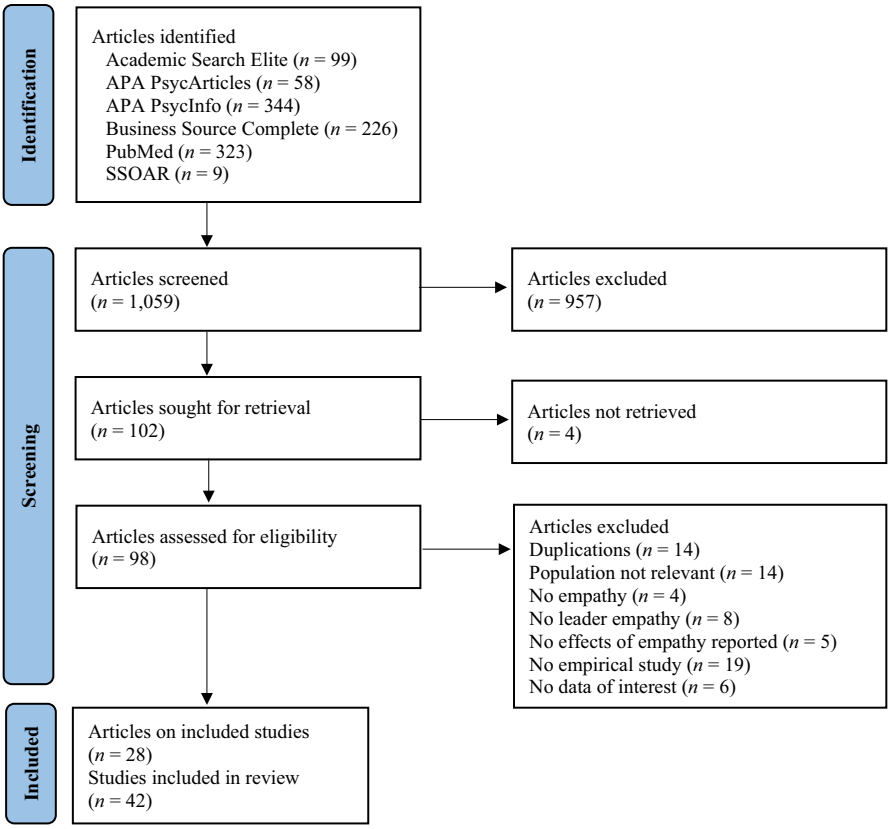

Fig. 1 Flow diagram of relevant contributions identified and excluded according to the PRISMA guidelines

3.3 Reporting phase

In this phase, we manually extracted relevant data from our final sample and summarized them in an Excel table. As well as focusing on the formal characteristics of (1) author, (2) year, (3) title, and (4) journal, we formulated the following content-related categories: (5) research question(s) and hypotheses, (6) study design, (7) sample, (8) branch, (9) conceptualization of empathy, (10) measuring instrument for empathy, and (11) effects associated with a leader's empathy. In gathering and reporting the relevant aspects of each article, the first two authors collaboratively practiced the extraction process with example articles to align a consistent approach. After that, the remaining articles were divided between the first two authors, who worked independently but in close consultation with one another.

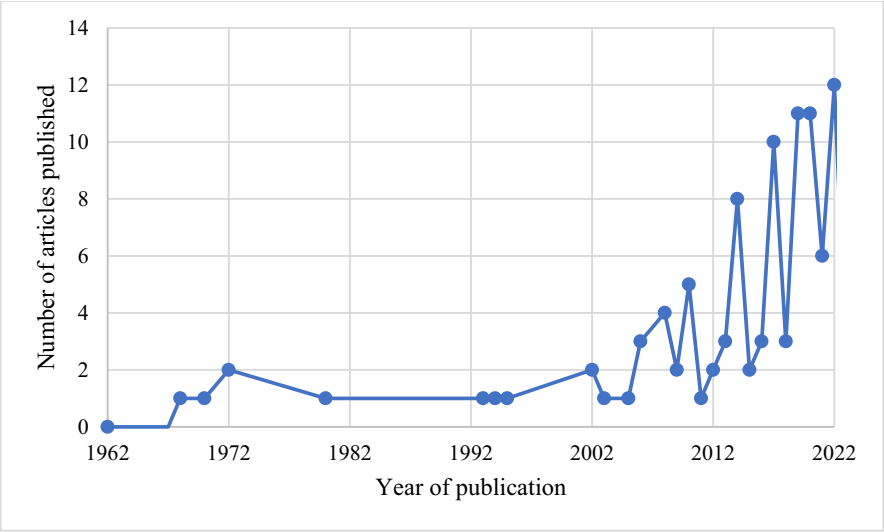

Fig. 2 Number of articles on empathetic leadership matching the criteria and sought for retrieval published over time

4 Results

This chapter presents the results of the study selection process. First, we perform a descriptive analysis to reveal general characteristics to the readers. We show the publication periods, venues, and numbers of citations of the included articles. Additionally, we provide a concise overview of the study designs used and the sectors in which the studies were conducted. Second, we analyze the content of the included studies. We especially look at the prevailing understandings of empathy and the measuring instruments to answer SRQs 2 and 3. In order to respond to our MRQ, we present categories that emerged from the analysis of the included studies. These categories summarize effects of empathetic leaders. When describing these categories, we also address who is affected by the revealed effects, thus answering SRQ 1.

4.1 Descriptive analysis

4.1.1 Historical publication evolution

The search queries indicate that the initial article on the subject dates back to 1968, but the rise in publications has been noticeable since the early 2000s, as Fig. 2 shows. The number of articles does not increase proportionally, and some years have fewer publications meeting the set criteria. However, there is a clear upward trend with regard to the issue of empathy within the leadership context.

Figure 3 shows that only publications from 2009 onwards were considered relevant to this article and analyzed. There are various reasons for this. For example, previous results were not relevant to our research questions.

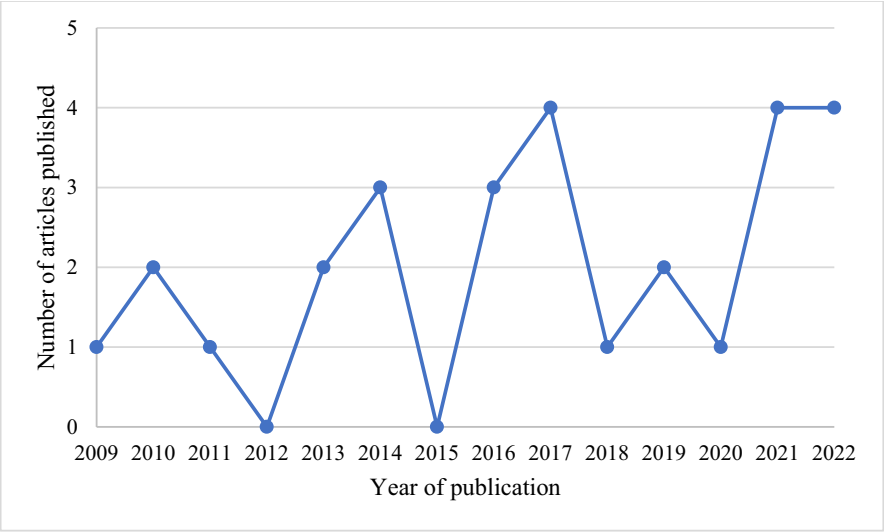

Fig. 3 Number of finally included articles on empathetic leadership published over time

Table 3 Publication venues of the analyzed articles in alphabetical order

Journal	Number of articles analyzed
Academy of Management Journal	1
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	1
Business & Society Review	1
Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	1
European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology	1
Human Relations	1
Human Resources Management Journal	1
International Journal of Business Communication	3
Journal of Applied Psychology	1
Journal of Business Ethics	6
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology	2
Journal of Internet Computing and Services	1
Journal of Management	2
Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	1
Journal of Organizational Behaviour	1
Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes	1
The International Journal of Human Resource Management	1
The Journal for Decision Makers	1

4.1.2 Publication venues

The research investigation identified a total of 102 results, of which 28 articles were thoroughly examined and incorporated into this article following the removal of duplicate entries and the initial analysis. The 28 articles were published in 18 distinct journals.

Table 3 shows that the Journal of Business Ethics, in particular, has a high number of relevant articles. The Journal of Business Ethics (2024) welcomes "a wide variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives concerning ethical issues related to business." Therefore, it is not surprising to find several relevant articles on empathetic leaders in this outlet. Additionally, articles on this topic are distributed across different management, human resources, and psychology journals.

The included articles have citation ranges of 1 to 206. Using Google Scholar and Research Gate and the cutoff date of October 22, 2023, the article by Scott et al. (2010) has the most citations with 206, followed by Patient and Skarlicki (2010) with 192 citations, Qin et al. (2018) with 178 citations, and Gregory and Levy (2011) with 146 citations. The remaining articles have received less than 150 citations.

4.1.3 Study design

The articles included in our review consider varying numbers of studies: One article (Blader and Rothman 2014) reports on four studies, all of which are relevant to our research interest and are therefore considered. Six articles (Bradley and Campbell 2016; Cornelis et al. 2013; Holt et al. 2021; Qin et al. 2018; Simon et al. 2022; Voegtlin et al. 2020) incorporate three studies. For Bradley and Campbell (2016) and Qin et al. (2018), we have chosen to examine only one study each in greater depth due to its alignment with our research interest. In Holt et al. (2021), two studies align with our research focus and are therefore included. For the remaining three articles, all studies are relevant and therefore considered. Six articles (Babalola et al. 2022; Dietz and Kleinlogel 2014; Ni et al. 2022; Patient

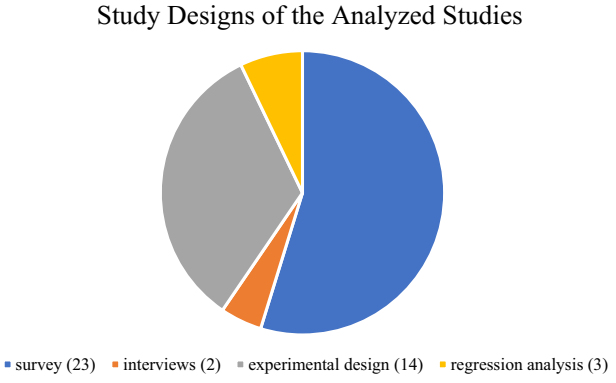

Fig. 4 Study designs of the analyzed studies

and Skarlicki 2010; Sharma and Bagozzi 2022; Young et al. 2017) describe two studies each. In Patient and Skarlicki (2010) and Sharma and Bagozzi (2022), only one of the two studies is pertinent to our research interest. For the other four articles, both studies are included. The remaining 15 articles each describe only one study that was included in the review. Consequently, our review considers 42 studies from 28 articles. These 42 studies apply different study designs (see Fig. 4).

All written questionnaires are included in the survey category. Interviews were conducted verbally between two people. Different methods were used in experimental design, such as the presentation or conditions of scenarios and a subsequent survey. Regression analysis involves an investigation into which variables have a precise influence on the topic of interest.

4.1.4 Participants and sectors

As participants, the included studies draw on managers, followers, and students, providing diverse perspectives on the research topic. Student surveys were used, for example, as a preliminary study or as a way to make inferences about future leaders. The largest sample size can be found in Ni et al. (2022), with $n = 781$ participating in a survey. The smallest sample size is observed in Jit et al. (2017), with $n = 15$ in an interview study.

Looking at the distribution of industrial sectors (Fig. 5), it is noticeable that the majority of the studies do not explicitly focus on one single sector. Instead, they cover a large mix of industries, including, for example, trade, healthcare, or the engineering sector. Eleven studies have been conducted on the public sector, which comprises individuals employed in government, public services, and public education. Four studies pertain to the field of information technology. The manufacturing and food industries were each explicitly mentioned in one study

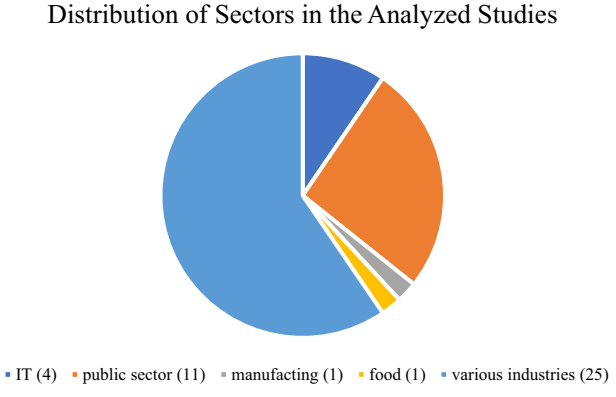

Fig. 5 Distribution of sectors in the analyzed studies

and are therefore also listed separately. In general, the analysis in this article provides a generic overview that does not refer to any specific industry.

4.2 Content analysis

In addition to the descriptive analysis, the content analysis focuses on the prevailing understanding of empathy, instruments for measuring empathy, and the effects of empathetic leaders in its subchapters.

4.2.1 Empathy understandings

As explained earlier, empathy has various definitions. Therefore, SRQ 2 analyzes how empathy is conceptualized by the authors of the included studies. As anticipated, the 28 included articles use a variety of different definitions. Table 4 displays the specific definitions of empathy used in each article. In several cases, authors speak of specific forms of empathy, such as empathic concern (e.g., Cornelis et al. 2013), cultural empathy (van Woerkom and de Reuver 2009), or empathetic language (e.g., Madlock 2013). On the other hand, some authors, such as Hahm (2017), do not provide a clear definition of empathy despite researching it. Whenever available, Table 4 additionally displays the references on which the authors base their definitions. It is noteworthy that the authors most frequently cite publications by Davis (six times), Batson (five times), and Eisenberg (four times) when explaining their understanding of empathy. Considering empathy as a multidimensional construct that combines cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Clark et al. 2019), the final column of Table 4 indicates which dimension of empathy can be identified in the given definitions. The affective dimension is most frequently addressed, while references to the behavioral perspective are less common. Thus, the definitions of empathy often fail to consider all three dimensions of the multidimensional construct simultaneously.

4.2.2 Measuring empathy

To address SRQ 3, we analyzed the instruments used to measure empathy in the included studies. A total of 15 different instruments could be identified. Of these, the IRI (Interpersonal Reactivity Index) is the most commonly used one, with 24 references. The IRI has its origins in the work of Davis (1980). With the IRI, Davis presents a self-report instrument that measures the global concept of empathy through four different subscales: perspective-taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. Each subscale consists of seven items and is rated by respondents on a scale from zero to four, with zero indicating that the depicted scenario does not describe them well and four indicating that the depicted scenario describes them very well (Davis 1980).

While the perspective-taking subscale assesses a person's spontaneous tendency to see a situation from another person's point of view, the fantasy subscale measures a person's act of identifying with the situations of fictional characters (e.g., from a

Table 4 Empathy definitions

Article	Definition	References	Dimension
Babalola et al. (2022)	**Supervisor empathy**: no definition stated	–	–
Blader and Rothmann (2014)	**Empathy**: "other-oriented emotional responses that are congruent with the welfare of the target of one's emotional focus" (p. 65)	Batson (1991)	Affective, Behavioral
Bradley and Campbell (2016)	**Empathy**: no definition stated	–	–
Cornelis et al. (2013)	**Leader empathy**: "ability to accurately recognize, perceive, and experience another's emotions, is likely to affect the degree to which leaders are inclined to take actions based on followers' motives" (p. 606) **Empathic concern**: "variations in vicarious other-oriented emotions, 'feeling for' the other person and understanding the needs of others […] which has been linked to an increased motivation to take actions in response to these needs" (p. 606)	Batson (1991), Davis (1996), Eisenberg (2000), Eisenberg et al. (1989), Zaki et al. (2008)	Cognitive, Affective, Behavioral
Dietz and Kleinlogel (2014)	**Empathy**: "'an other-oriented emotional response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need'" (p. 461)	Batson (2008)	Affective
Greenbaum et al. (2021)	**Empathy**: "ability to recognize and understand the needs of other people" (p. 110)	Batson and Moran (1999), Davis (1983), Eisenberg (2000), Tangney et al. (2007)	Cognitive
Gregory and Levy (2010)	**Interactive empathy**: no definition stated	–	–
Hahm (2017)	**Empathetic language**: no definition stated	–	Behavioral
Holt et al. (2021)	**Perspective-taking**: "cognitive component of empathy" (p. 709)	Davis (1983)	Cognitive
Jancenelle (2021)	**Empathy**: "ability to perceive the feelings of others, and to show sympathy, concern, support and kindness toward others" (p. 196)	Chun (2005)	Cognitive, Behavioral

Table 4 (continued)

Article	Definition	References	Dimension
Jit et al. (2017)	**Empathy**: "feel the followers' suffering and with altruistic calling, healing and service orientation, they can serve by taking action to alleviate their suffering" (p. 82)	–	Affective, Behavioral
Li et al. (2019)	No definition stated	–	–
Lloyd et al. (2017)	**Empathic listening**: "an appreciating and non-judgmental way of perceiving and responding to an individual" (p. 433)	Rogers (1951), Rogers (1975)	Cognitive, (Affective), Behavioral
Madlock (2013)	**Empathetic language**: "language that expresses the emotions of a leader through shared feelings, praise, criticisms and so forth" (p. 196)	Sullivan (1988)	Behavioral
Metz et al. (2014)	**Empathetic managers**: "willing to try to address pain and suffering in organizations as 'toxin handlers'" (p. 248)	Frost (2007)	Not clear
Meyer et al. (2016)	**Mimicry**: "'the adoption of the mannerisms, posture, gestures, and motor movements of one's interaction partner'" (p. 778)	Chartrand and van Baaren (2009)	Behavioral
Ni et al. (2022)	**Empathic concern**: "the affective other-oriented component of empathy" (p. 3)	Davis (1980)	Affective
Patient and Skarlicki (2010)	**Affective empathic concern**: "an emotional response that stems from or is congruent with another person's emotional state or condition" (p. 557)	Eisenberg and Strayer (1987)	Affective
Qin et al. (2018)	**Empathic concern**: "an individual's tendency to experience feelings of sympathy and compassion for others" (p. 1952)	Davis and Oathout (1987)	Affective

Table 4 (continued)

Article	Definition	References	Dimension
Scott et al. (2010)	**Empathy**: "'one's sensitivity to the emotional experiences of another', […] the capacity to place oneself in the 'emotional shoes' of another person" (p. 127)	Lazarus (1991), Lazarus (1999), McNeely and Meglino (1994)	Affective
Sharma and Bagozzi (2022)	**Empathic concern**: "automatic tendencies of people to feel compassion or pity for other people" (p. 99)	Walter (2012)	Affective
Simon et al. (2022)	**Trait empathy**: "a tendency to feel concern for others, to understand others' internal states, and to feel congruent emotions with others" (p. 280)	Decety and Jackson (2004), Koopman et al. (2021)	Cognitive, Affective
Sosik et al. (2019)	**Empathy**: "being socially intelligent, confident and even-tempered in social settings, and sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others" (p. 769)	Hogan (1969), Johnson et al. (1983)	Cognitive, Affective, Behavioral
Van Woerkom and de Reuver (2009)	**Cultural empathy**: "ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of members of different cultural groups" (p. 2016)	–	Cognitive, Affective
Voegtlin et al. (2020)	**Perspective-taking**: "the ability to spontaneously adopt the psychological view- point of others" (p. 414) **Empathic concern**: "motivates individuals to care for stakeholders' needs" (p. 414)	Davis (1983), Singer (2006)	Cognitive, Affective
Whiteside and Barclay (2016)	**Empathy**: "an individual's 'sensitivity to the emotional experiences of another'" (p. 722)	McNeely and Meglino (1994)	Affective

Table 4 (continued)

Article	Definition	References	Dimension
Young et al. (2017)	**Empathic concern**: "the other-oriented emotion elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone else in need" (p. 538)	Batson (2011)	Affective
Yue et al. (2021)	**Empathetic language** as a form of leader motivating language: "leaders using supportive, compassionate, and respectful language to connect with employees" (p. 176)	Mayfield and Mayfield (2012), Sun et al. (2016)	Behavioral

Table 5 Example items for the IRI subscales taken from Davis (1980, pp. 10–11)

Scale	Example item
Perspective-Taking	"Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place." (item 28)
Fantasy	"When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character." (item 23)
Empathic Concern	"I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me." (item 2)
Personal Distress	"When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces." (item 27)

book or a film). Both the empathic concern subscale and the personal distress subscale measure affective responses (Davis 1983), differing in their orientations and concrete expressions. The empathic concern subscale assesses "other-oriented" (Davis 1983, p. 114) emotions, such as sympathy or warmth. In contrast, the personal distress subscale measures "self-oriented" (Davis 1983, p. 114) emotions, such as discomfort or anxiety that result from observing another person's suffering (Davis 1980, 1983). Table 5 shows an example item for each of the subscales.

It is striking that the studies included in our systematic review almost exclusively use items from the empathic concern and/or perspective-taking subscales. Only the studies in Simon et al. (2022) do not specify which IRI subscale their seven items come from.

Furthermore, Holt et al. (2021, Study II), Li et al. (2019), Patient and Skarlicki (2010, Study I) and Voegtlin et al. (2020, Studies I–III) do not include all seven items of the respective subscales: Instead, they only selected three to four items. Voegtlin et al. (2020, Studies I–III) use a German translation of the IRI, which was developed by Paulus (2009).

The second most frequently used measuring instruments in our final corpus of included studies are empathetic language as a dimension of motivating language (Mayfield and Mayfield 2012, 2018; Mayfield et al. 1995) and supervisor empathy (Arnaud and Schminke 2012). Each is referenced by three studies. Empathetic language is one of the three dimensions of motivating language, along with meaning-making language and direction-giving language (Mayfield and Mayfield 2012, 2018; Mayfield et al. 1995). Mayfield and Mayfield (2018) distinguish between six different types to express empathetic language, which vary in their depth and breadth. Depending on their language skills, leaders can, for example, cordially greet their followers in the morning, thereby articulating politeness as one possible expression of empathetic language. Praising successfully completed tasks and providing reassurance in the event of setbacks are other ways to display empathetic language. Regardless of the specific type, empathetic language requires an emotional connection with followers. As a result, leaders demonstrate appropriate verbal responses to multitudinous events both in their followers' professional and personal lives. The empathetic language scale is composed of six items that depict different ways leaders may communicate with their followers (e.g., "gives me praise for my good work"; Mayfield and Mayfield 2018, p. 124). The followers are asked to rate the

Table 6 Empathy measuring instruments

Instruments	References	Studies	Σ
The IRI	Davis (1980), Davis (1983), Paulus (2009) (German translation)*	Blader and Rothman (2014, Studies I–IV) (*seven items* each from the perspective-taking and empathic concern subscales) Cornelis et al. (2013, Studies I–III) (*seven items* from the empathic concern subscale) Dietz and Kleinlogel (2014, Studies I and II) (*seven items* each from the perspective-taking and empathic concern subscales) Holt et al. (2021, Study II) (*four items* adopted from the perspective-taking subscale) Holt et al. (2021, Study III) (*seven items* from the perspective-taking subscale) Li et al. (2019) (*three items* from the empathic concern subscale) Ni et al. (2022, Studies I and II) (*seven items* from the empathic concern subscale) Patient and Skarlicki (2010, Study I) (*three items* from the empathic concern subscale) Qin et al. (2018, Study II) (*seven items* from the empathic concern subscale) Sharma and Bagozzi (2022, Study I) (*four items* each adopted from the perspective-taking and empathic concern subscales)[a] Simon et al. (2022, Studies IIa and IIb) (*seven items*, not specified) Voegtlin et al. (2020, Studies I–III) (*eight items* in total from the perspective-taking and empathic concern subscales)*	22
Empathetic language as a dimension of motivating language	Mayfield and Mayfield (2018), Mayfield and Mayfield (2012), Mayfield et al. (1995)	Hahm (2017) (*number of items not stated*) Madlock (2013) (*six items*) Yue et al. (2021) (*six items*)	3

Table 6 (continued)

Instruments	References	Studies	Σ
Supervisor empathy	Arnaud and Schminke (2012)	Babalola et al. (2022, Studies I and II) (*seven items*) Greenbaum et al. (2021) (*seven items*)	3
Empathy subscale of the TCI	Cloninger et al. (1994)	Simon et al. (2022, Study I) (*five items*) Whiteside and Barclay (2016) (*eight items*)	2
Not mentioned/specified	–	Jit et al. (2017) Metz et al. (2014)	2
The Active Empathetic Listening (AEL) Scale	Drollinger et al. (2006)	Lloyd et al. (2017) (*11 items*)	1
Behavioral mimicry	Frank et al. (2010)	Meyer et al. (2016)	1
Cultural empathy as one construct in the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ)	Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2001)	van Woerkom and de Reuver (2009) (*18 items*)	1
Supervisor empathy	Richard et al. (2016)	Young et al. (2017, Study I) (*six items*)	1
Empathic concern	Gentry et al. (2015), Sadri et al. (2011)	Young et al. (2017, Study II) (*four items*)	1
Empathic concern and personal distress	Batson (1987), Coke et al. (1978)	Scott et al. (2010)	1
Empathy as one dimension in the organizational virtue construct	Payne et al. (2011)	Jancenelle (2021)	1
Empathy as a subscale of the Communication Climate Inventory (CCI)	Costigan and Schmeidler (1984)	Bradley and Campbell (2016, Study II) (*three items*)	1
The Empathy Scale	Hogan (1969), Johnson et al. (1983)	Sosik et al. (2019) (*15 items*)	1
Interactive empathy	Kellett et al. (2006)	Gregory and Levy (2010) (*five items* adopted)	1
			42

[a]Also referring to Lawrence et al. (2004) andBatchelder et al. (2017)

extent to which the described communication behavior applies to their leaders on a five-point scale ranging from one (very little) to five (a whole lot). In contrast to the IRI (Davis 1980), the assessment of leaders' empathy is not based on the leaders' self-reports, but rather on the followers' perceptions. Both Madlock (2013) and Yue et al. (2021) employ all six items to assess empathetic language, whereas Hahm (2017) does not state the number of items used.

As with empathic language, "supervisor empathy" is cited in three studies. Both Studies I and II conducted by Babalola et al. (2022) and the research carried out by Greenbaum et al. (2021) evaluate the concept of "supervisor empathy," with reference to the work of Arnaud and Schminke (2012). However, Greenbaum et al. (2021) note that this seven-item measure also draws on Davis's (1980) IRI, but without specifying which particular subscale is used. In order to assess supervisor empathy, supervisors are requested to reflect on tasks they have performed during the preceding three weeks and respond to seven statements, such as "Others' misfortunes usually disturb me a great deal" (Greenbaum et al. 2021, p. 114). The respondents are expected to rate these statements on a five-point scale, where one denotes "strongly disagree," and five represents "strongly agree."

Two studies (Simon et al. 2022, Study I; Whiteside and Barclay 2016) refer to Cloninger et al.'s (1994) Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI). The TCI, as a comprehensive instrument for personality assessment, comprises 240 items covering 4 dimensions of temperament and 3 dimensions of character. In their research, Simon et al. (2022) and Whiteside and Barclay (2016) use a select number of five and eight items, respectively, to measure empathy. Leaders are presented with statements such as "I am concerned about others" (Simon et al. 2022) and must indicate whether they agree or disagree with each statement.

The ten remaining instruments for measuring empathy are each used in only one study. Five of these instruments consider followers' perceptions to assess leaders' empathy (Bradley and Campbell 2016; Gregory and Levy 2011; Lloyd et al. 2017; Young et al. 2017, Studies I and II). Three studies (Scott et al. 2010; Sosik et al. 2019; van Woerkom and de Reuver 2009) use instruments that rely on self-report data from leaders. Beyond that, Meyer et al. (2016) utilize motion sensors that are attached to long-sleeved shirts in order to measure behavioral mimicry as a "micro-level manifestation" (p. 773) of leaders' empathy, thereby employing a physiological measurement approach. The authors define mimicry, with reference to Chartrand and van Baaren (2009, p. 225), as "the adoption of the mannerisms, posture, gestures, and motor movements of one's interaction partner." Distinctly, Jancenelle (2021) applies textual analysis using the dictionary approach. Thus, the assessment of leader empathy in this study is neither derived from self-assessment nor follower perception. Instead, the author analyzes earnings call transcripts as a third-party observer. Only Jit et al. (2017) and Metz et al. (2014) do not explicitly mention an instrument to measure empathy in their research, despite claiming to assess it.

Table 6 summarizes the measurement instruments utilized in the studies we identified. They are listed in descending order of frequency along with the sources of reference for each.

4.2.3 Effects of empathetic leaders

The identified studies reveal a variety of effects that are associated with empathetic leaders. These effects can be grouped into different categories. In alphabetical order, the following categories emerged from the analysis of the studies: affect, attitudes, empathy, equity, interpersonal relationships, leadership practice, perception, performance, well-being, and others. The final category includes singular effects for which no common generic term has been found. Below, we give a more detailed description of each of these categories and the parties concerned, thereby answering our MRQ and SRQ 1.

4.2.3.1 Affect In the context of this analysis, this category encompasses all studies that provide information on emotional states or moods resulting from empathetic leaders. Studies assigned to this category independently make use of the term "affect" in their explanations.

Yue et al. (2021) adopt a rather global perspective and examine the influence of empathetic leaders on all members of an organization. The authors come to the conclusion that leaders who use motivating language and who are, thus, empathetic, since motivating language encompasses meaning-making, empathetic, and direction-giving language, foster a positive emotional culture: The greater the use of motivating language by leaders, the more likely it is that members of the organization will experience a positive emotional culture. In the authors' understanding, a positive emotional culture represents the *affective* aspect of organizational culture and is characterized by "joy, companionate love, pride, and gratitude" (Yue et al. 2021, p. 170).

In comparison with Yue et al. (2021), Young et al. (2017, Study I) have a narrower focus regarding the group of people influenced by empathetic leaders: Their results concentrate on followers. Young et al. (2017) empirically validate O'Malley and Gregory's (2011) proposition that leaders can use various positive psychology techniques to boost positive affect and reduce negative affect when giving negative feedback to followers. In their research, Young et al. (2017) focus on "observable manifestations of empathic concern" (p. 538) as leaders' strategy derived from positive psychology. This involves behaving in ways that visibly demonstrate emotional responsiveness (Kalshoven et al. 2013). According to affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano 1996), events seen as threats, such as receiving negative feedback, cause negative affect, while beneficial events create positive affect. When leaders show empathic concern, it signals that they understand their followers' job challenges and care about them, reducing the negative impact of receiving negative feedback. Furthermore, displaying empathic concern conveys warmth and kindness, indicating that the leader's feedback is meant to help, which increases positive affective reactions among followers (Gaddis et al. 2004), such as enthusiasm, interest, and excitement (see the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) by Watson et al. 1988). Young et al.'s (2017) study results confirm that followers who received negative feedback from a leader scoring high in empathic concern experience a greater increase in positive affect compared to a control group.

According to Sharma and Bagozzi (2022), being an empathetic leader can also have an impact on leaders themselves. The authors demonstrate that the affect of leaders who score high on empathic concern may differ from that of leaders who score low on empathic concern. Focusing on bribery, the authors discuss a rather specific topic that is not usually typically part of leaders' daily business. In their results, the authors conclude that, when witnessing a person refusing to pay a bribe, leaders feels greater positive affect towards the bribe denier if the leaders score high in empathic concern. The authors attribute their findings to the fact that leaders' own predispositions are strengthened (Sharma and Bagozzi 2022).

4.2.3.2 Attitudes This article understands the psychological construct of attitude to be generally defined as one's mental position toward people or work. Empathetic leaders can influence both person-related (Bradley and Campbell 2016, Study II; Lloyd et al. 2017; Young et al. 2017, Study II) and work-related (Lloyd et al. 2017; Madlock 2013) attitudes of followers.

Young et al. (2017, Study II) and Bradley and Campbell (2016, Study II) demonstrate a positive effect on followers' attitudes toward their leaders. According to Young et al. (2017, Study II), leaders with high levels of empathic concern can even provide negative feedback in an appropriate manner that allows for positive affect in followers (see the section on affect), resulting in better attitudes toward the leaders (Young et al. 2017, Study II). Comparable conclusions were drawn by Bradley and Campbell (2016, Study II). They applied a critical incidents approach that asked followers to remember a challenging workplace conversation (e.g., a conversation in which their superior provided negative feedback because of insufficient work performance). With these conversations in mind, followers evaluated the supportiveness of their leaders and reported on the degree of satisfaction with the latter's communication behavior. The results provide evidence that empathy, as one supportive communication behavior, is linked to followers' satisfaction.

In terms of work-related attitudes, Madlock (2013) reports an impact on job satisfaction. Referring to Locke (1976, p. 1300), Madlock (2013) defines job satisfaction as "a pleasure or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." In his study, Madlock (2013) investigates leaders' usage of motivating language, which includes direction giving, empathetic language, and meaning-making, and its influence on followers, specifically on telecommuters who work from someplace other than the office (e.g., home). The study results outline a positive relationship between leaders' use of motivating language and telecommuters' job satisfaction. Although the standardized regression coefficients reveal that direction giving is the strongest predictor of followers' job satisfaction, empathetic language was also found to be significant, highlighting its importance in telecommuting settings.

Lloyd et al. (2017) address both person-related and work-related attitudes of followers. They found that supervisor listening positively impacts job satisfaction as well as satisfaction with one's supervisor.

4.2.3.3 Empathy Two articles (Li et al. 2019; Ni et al. 2022) outline that empathetic leaders can also inspire empathy in others. Li et al. (2019) discuss empathy, sympathy, and pity as a joint construct (=ESP). The researchers suggest that leaders' ESP can also elicit ESP in their followers. Ni et al. (2022) base their studies on empathic concern as a comprehension of empathy. They demonstrate a significant positive relationship between leader empathic concern and team member empathic concern. Empathetic leaders are able to create an environment that emphasizes the significance and attractiveness of empathy in the workplace, which, in turn, encourages others to follow suit.

4.2.3.4 Equity Equity encompasses the concepts of fairness and justice and the principle of treating everyone impartially. When leaders are empathetic, they are more likely to behave equitably, which ideally results in followers feeling they are treated equitably.

Following that assumption, Lloyd et al. (2017) confirm that empathetic leaders may influence the interactional justice of followers. With reference to Colquitt (2001) and Greenberg (1987), the authors define interactional justice as the extent to which individuals perceive that they have been treated with respect and dignity.

While Lloyd et al. (2017) thus focus on the recipients of possible empathy-induced equity, Holt et al. (2021), Patient and Skarlicki (2010), and Whiteside and Barclay (2016) examine the antecedent step of how empathy influences leaders' equity behavior. All the authors highlight the beneficial role of empathetic leaders for interactional justice in the event of communicating bad news, such as negative outcomes. However, interactional justice comprises two facets, namely interpersonal justice and informational justice (Patient and Skarlicki 2010). While interpersonal justice refers to how courteous, dignified, and concerned leaders are with regard to their followers when delivering bad news, informational justice refers to whether leaders provide a satisfactory explanation for the decisions they have made. Patient and Skarlicki (2010) suggest that the revealed relationship between empathetic leaders and a pronounced use of interactional justice arises because high levels of empathic concern enable leaders to perceive elements of fairness in any situation, thus simplifying deep sympathy. In addition, leaders with high levels of empathetic concern are better able to comprehend the profound negative consequences for their followers that may result from the delivery of bad news. They also perceive the potential damage as undeserved for their followers. Research conducted by Cornelis et al. (2013) suggests that empathetic leaders are more aware of their followers' need for belongingness and are more likely to engage in fair behaviors.

4.2.3.5 Interpersonal relationships This category includes all the effects of empathetic leaders that impact interpersonal relationships in some way. This article broadly understands interpersonal relationships to be connections and interactions between individuals, involving the way people communicate with, relate to, and engage with one another on various levels, including emotional, social, or professional aspects.

In their research, Gregory and Levy (2011) focus on the quality of interpersonal relationships arising in employee coaching when followers perceive their coaches as empathetic. The authors define employee coaching as a process that occurs between followers and their direct leaders, with the leaders taking on the role of the coaches. Employee coaching aims at improving followers' recent job performance and preparing them for upcoming challenges (Gregory and Levy 2010). Gregory and Levy (2011) conclude that if followers experience greater empathy from their leader, they will also feel better about the quality of the coaching relationship. A high perceived quality of the employee coaching relationship (PQECR) is characterized by "genuineness, effective communication, comfort with the relationship, and facilitating development" (Gregory and Levy 2011, p. 75).

Ni et al. (2022) show that leader empathic concern is positively related to team member empathic concern (see the section on empathy), which improves team members' interpersonal organizational citizenship behavior (IOCB). This mediated effect can also be classified under the category of interpersonal relationships. IOCB is part of the broader organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) framework first introduced by Dennis Organ in the 1980s (e.g., Organ 1988; Smith et al. 1983). While OCB describes behaviors that contribute to the overall functioning and effectiveness of an organization but are not explicitly part of followers' formal job descriptions, IOCB focuses specifically on those voluntary actions that followers take in order to enhance interpersonal relationships within their organization and, thus, contribute positively to the social environment of their workplace.

4.2.3.6 Leadership practice Several authors highlight the role of empathy in different leadership practices. This article understands that leadership practices refer to a range of leadership behaviors grouped under an established generic term in scientific literature.

According to van Woerkom and de Reuver (2009), a higher score for transformational leadership can be achieved through increased cultural empathy. To explain the leadership practice of transformational leadership, van Woerkom and de Reuver (2009) refer to Bass (1985) and Bass et al. (2003), who outline inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration as central components of transformational leadership. Similarly, Simon et al. (2022) also observed a positive effect between the trait of empathy and transformational leadership behavior in their results.

Sosik et al. (2019) acknowledge a correlation between empathy and ethical leadership. The authors characterize ethical leaders as "honest, humble, […] courageous […] and self-controlled" (p. 766) and define ethical leadership, with reference to Brown et al. (2005, p. 120), as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making." Sosik et al. (2019) further outline that ethical leadership, when combined with high levels of empathy, results in a stronger perception of performance. In line with Sosik et al. (2019), Greenbaum et al. (2021) also demonstrate a link between leader empathy and ethical leadership.

Voegtlin et al. (2020) hypothesize that empathy is positively related to responsible leadership, broadly understood as accountability to various stakeholders. Their findings confirm that empathetic leaders facilitate responsible leadership.

Babalola et al. (2022) outline an indirect effect of perceived top management bottom-line mentality and supervisor servant leadership through supervisor empathy: Even if top managers focus only on results and thus exhibit a bottom-line mentality, supervisor empathy leads to servant leadership behaviors. Servant leaders, for example, show "sensitivity to others' personal concerns [and demonstrate] a conscious, genuine concern for helping the community" (Liden et al. 2008, p. 162).

4.2.3.7 Perception Another effect of empathy is the perception of others and oneself. In the discussion of self-perception, it is important to distinguish between leaders' self-perception and followers' self-perception. In the articles analyzed, leaders' self-perception is primarily concerned with their own effectiveness in the event of providing negative feedback (Simon et al. 2022). According to Simon et al. (2022), leaders with high trait empathy who give negative feedback perceive themselves as less effective.

Yue et al. (2021) report on a change in perception among followers. Empathetic language as part of leader motivation language has a significant indirect effect via emotional culture on followers' organizational identification, representing a special form of social identification (Ashforth et al. 2008; Mael and Ashforth 1992), in which individuals perceive themselves as part of the organization. Followers feel a stronger sense of belonging to the organization, which, in turn, can have a positive effect on follower loyalty (Yue et al. 2021).

The perception of the leader from the follower perspective is another relevant factor when considering the outcomes of empathetic leaders. According to Meyer et al. (2016), leaders are rated more positively by their followers when they act empathetically toward them. This perception can improve team decision-making by creating a psychologically safe space. Furthermore, leaders with high levels of empathy are perceived as effective leaders. It should be added here that Sosik et al. (2019) attribute this not only to empathy per se but also to a general, ethical leadership style. Young et al. (2017, Study I) show that followers rate a leader's negative feedback effectiveness higher when the leader's empathic concern is higher. This observation contrasts with the self-perception results of Simon et al. (2022) described above.

4.2.3.8 Performance Other effects of empathy in a leadership context can be seen in terms of performance. A distinction can be made between follower, leader, and team performance aspects.

The empathetic type of communication between leaders and followers has a positive effect on performance, according to Hahm (2017). Empathetic communication has an even greater impact on follower performance in uncertain times or in an uncertain industry. Li et al. (2019) support this statement and confirm that empathy shown by leaders toward their followers can lead to an increase in the performance of the followers. Ni et al. (2022) state that in addition to increasing individual performance, leaders' empathic concern has a positive effect on

followers' empathic concern and, thus, has a positive influence on the entire team. This, in turn, has a positive effect on work behavior and thus on team performance. There is no debate that team performance is an important part of a company's competitiveness. The impact of empathy on performance not only affects the performance of followers but also the performance of the leader. The studies by Simon et al. (2022) show that the positive correlation between trait empathy and leadership effectiveness is higher than previous studies have suggested. This again shows that empathy is a relevant skill for leaders. Simon et al. (2022) do not provide an explanation as to why and how this positive relationship arises and call for more in-depth research.

4.2.3.9 Well-being Further effects of empathy in the context of leadership can be seen in the well-being of followers and leaders. The practice of empathy can have consequences for both mental and somatic well-being. The impact on mental well-being can be observed in both leaders and followers.

Hahm (2017) examines the hypothesis that empathetic communication reduces symptoms of exhaustion and burnout among followers. Hahm (2017) confirms this hypothesis and identifies empathetic communication as a key factor in reducing burnout. Thus, it is important for leaders to employ empathetic communication strategies to reduce burnout among their followers. Other factors that contribute to burnout reduction include the degree of participation and general satisfaction with communication. Jit et al. (2017) discuss the importance of the leader's ability to recognize and respond empathetically to followers' worries or suffering. This empathetic response can be expressed through both words and actions and is a crucial aspect of emotional healing and followers' well-being. Concrete examples of empathy include "comforting and calm" and "guidance and counselling" (Jit et al. 2017, p. 86).

According to Scott et al. (2010), leaders' empathy can positively impact the daily well-being of followers on both somatic and mental levels. On a somatic level, Scott et al. (2010) state that followers who work for an empathetic leader perceive fewer somatic complaints. At the same time, on a mental level, they assume that empathetic leaders offer more support (e.g., in the form of social support or less judgment regarding mistakes). Even when targets are not met, which can be a stressor for followers, empathy helps a leader to increase their followers' well-being. Overall, a variety of research shows that a leader's empathetic behavior can have a positive impact on their followers' well-being.

As previously stated, empathetic leadership can also impact the mental well-being of leaders themselves. Sosik et al. (2019) found that empathetic leadership behavior, when paired with high self-control, leads to various positive outcomes, including the increased well-being of the leader. The authors suggest that this is closely linked to the leader's performance. Simon et al. (2022) also establish a connection between empathetic leadership behavior, increased leader performance, and well-being. While Sosik et al. (2019) discuss empathy in a general sense, Simon et al. (2022) focus specifically on trait empathy. Metz et al. (2014) confirm this aspect in general

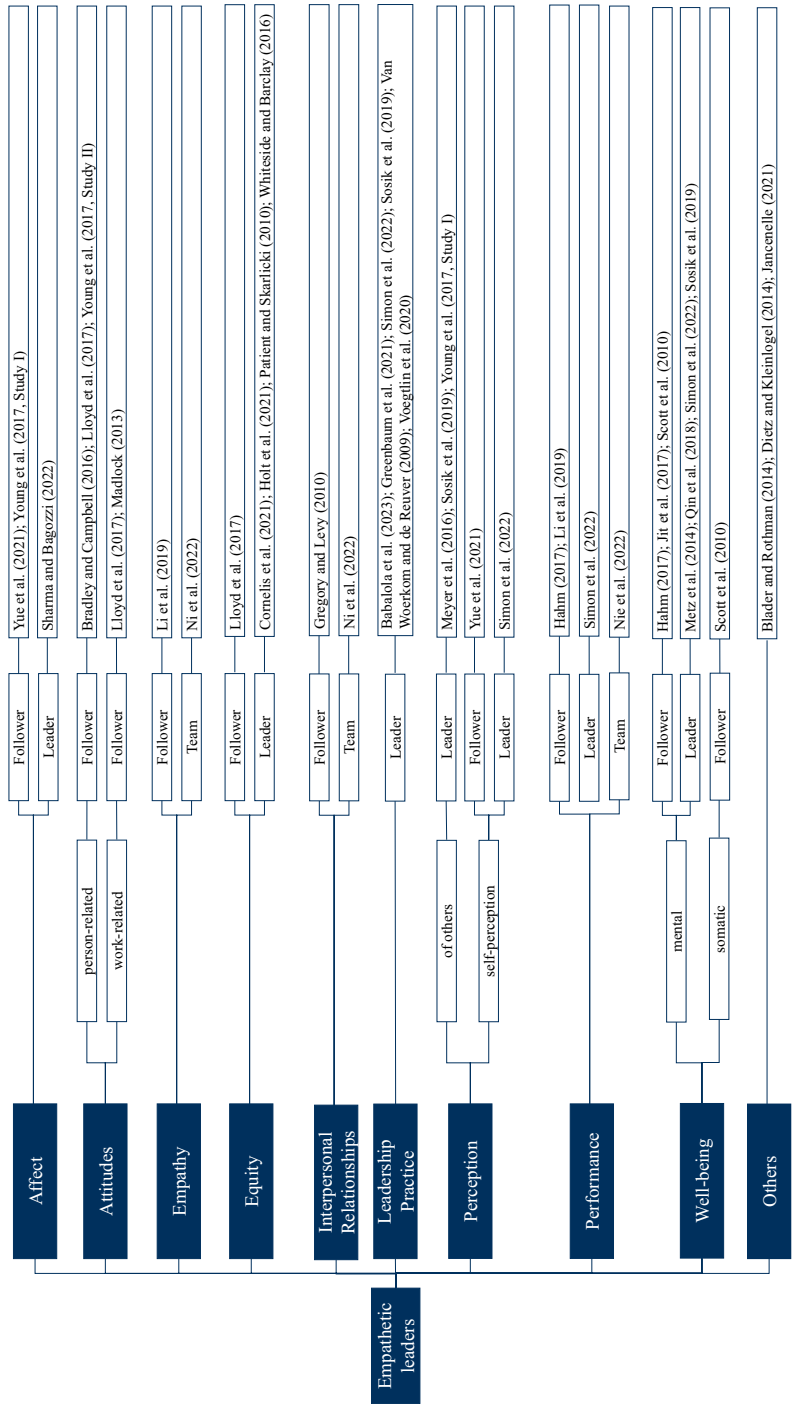

Fig. 6 Category system summarizing the effects associated with empathetic leaders in the included studies

but do not specifically address the performance aspect. Qin et al. (2018) add the concept of empathic concern and its association with the leader's well-being.

4.2.3.10 Others In addition to the effects described above, there are other aspects that cannot be assigned to any specific category. Such effects of empathy that do not clearly fit into the previous categories can be found in this one.

Dietz and Kleinlogel (2014) use the example of wage cuts to illustrate how empathetic leaders exhibit positive ethical behavior by considering the needs of followers and adapting to them as much as possible. The authors conclude that empathy can even result in "noncompliance with requests (…) [from] authority figures" (Dietz and Kleinlogel 2014, p. 470) to reduce wages. Blader and Rothman (2014) found a similar effect in their studies. The authors discovered that high empathy can lead to preferential treatment toward a needy target, especially in group contexts. However, they noted that this effect is more pronounced when the leader's accountability is low. Jancenelle (2021) noted that empathetic leaders can have a negative impact on market reactions. Shareholders may consider excessive empathy in corporate governance to be inadequate and ineffective. This assumption is confirmed by other authors (e.g., König et al. 2020). Research suggests that excessive empathy is perceived as ineffective, particularly in times of crisis. Accordingly, leaders should be aware that overly empathetic corporate governance can have a negative impact on shareholder valuation when communicating with shareholders (Jancenelle 2021).

Figure 6 summarizes the effects revealed by the identified studies and indicates who is affected by these effects, including followers, leaders, and/or teams.

5 Discussion

In this article, we conducted a systematic literature review to gain a better understanding of the effects of empathetic leaders in organizations. Following our research interest, we addressed one MRQ and several related SRQs. With regard to our MRQ, we aimed to identify and systematize empirically proven effects of empathetic leaders. Overall, our systematic search process revealed a variety of different effects associated with empathetic leaders, which we clustered into nine thematic categories. It turns out that empathetic leaders can influence affect and attitudes. Furthermore, being an empathetic leader may also encourage others to show empathy. Empathetic leaders can have an impact on equity in the workplace, interpersonal relationships, and leadership practices. In addition, the results show that empathetic leaders can change perceptions and influence performance. Many of the identified studies also attribute an influence on well-being to empathetic leaders. Moreover, there are other effects associated with empathetic leaders that have only been investigated in one single study. As the existing literature lacks a comprehensive overview and synthesis of the current state of empirical research on the effects of empathetic leaders, we have contributed to filling this gap through our thematic systematization. In doing so, our research design was open to identifying both positive and negative

effects of empathetic leaders. Our findings underscore that empathy in leadership is predominantly associated with positive outcomes, justifying its relevance.

Our first SRQ focused on the groups of people impacted by the effects described. The results of the review show that leaders themselves, followers, and teams are affected. The most commonly reported impact is on followers. As leaders themselves are also beneficiaries of empathy, for example, in terms of an enhanced reputation (Sosik et al. 2019), it is likely that if they are aware of these benefits, they will make greater efforts to use empathy in the workplace.

The second SRQ asked about the conceptualization of the construct of empathy in the included studies. Our review reveals that there is no consistent understanding of the term across studies and that conceptualizations with different emphases are subsumed under the label of empathy.

Building on this, the third SRQ asked how the authors of the included studies measured empathy. In line with the variety of conceptualizations, a wide range of measurement tools is used, with Davis's IRI (1980) being the most frequently applied. The usage of the "perspective-taking" and "empathic concern" subscales is particularly notable. It shows that the cognitive and affective components of the multidimensional approach (Clark et al. 2019) are particularly valued, whereas the behavioral component is rather neglected.

5.1 Limitations

It is important to note that this article, like any literature review, is not without limitations. First, it is possible that not all the relevant studies were included in this review due to the databases and keywords selected. Our search was explicitly designed to include only those articles that used the term empathy itself. Synonyms of empathy were not considered. In this way, it was possible to uncover wide variety with regard to what the authors grouped together under the same term. Given the diversity of conceptual understandings that have been revealed, one might naturally ask whether only one single concept is still being considered. Similarly, excluding synonyms means that articles that may also analyze empathy but do not label it as such were not included in our selection of literature. If synonyms of empathy had been included in the search string, the number of hits would have probably been even higher. Thus, it would have been possible to show not only that different facets of empathy are bundled into one term but also that different labels can be used to describe the same concept. In addition, regarding our research string, it is important to note that we have assumed that the authors themselves identify and name the effects of empathetic leaders as such. Studies that only examine empathy in combination with one of the main categories identified and do not explicitly label it as an effect, consequence, or impact of empathetic leaders (for all the recognized synonyms, see Table 1) are not included in our review.

Second, we have limited our search to German and English language studies due to our language skills. We therefore excluded from the start any studies in other languages, which might have produced different findings.

Third, we only included empirical articles from peer-reviewed journals. However, non-empirical articles may also provide relevant insights into the effects of empathetic leaders.

Fourth, as the reporting phase for studies is also time-consuming, the period of study selection and, thus, the determination of the final corpus to be analyzed was several months ago (study selection: May to June 2023). However, as our topic is very contemporary, other articles may have been published during the reporting phase that could not be included in this article.

Fifth, the categories developed may not always be clear-cut, as some are closely related or influence each other, such as performance and well-being. We have mainly used the wording in the studies as a guide for categorization. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible to use different categorizations or to create entirely new categories in order to depict the results. It was important to us, however, to provide the reader with an overview that is as concise and clear as possible. We encourage researchers to investigate the topic of empathetic leaders further by addressing and working on the weaknesses identified.

5.2 Future research agenda

In light of our findings, this section suggests new avenues of research for future researchers. In accordance with other authors before us (e.g., Cuff et al. 2016), we would also like to use our results to point out the need for a standardized understanding of the concept of empathy. Researchers are encouraged to make an effort in this regard. Until a consensus definition of empathy is established in research, we strongly agree with Batson (2009) and Duan and Hill (1996) that, to avoid confusion, one should clearly specify which understanding represents the basis for one's research and then use this throughout.

Of course, our comprehensible search process can also be repeated (and modified) to see if more hits can be generated over time. One possible modification is to omit the keyword "effect" and its synonyms within the research string. This might shed light on further effects emanating from empathetic leaders. These effects could be classified using the existing category system or by creating new categories, thereby increasing the differentiation. Enrichment and consolidation with additional effects may also lead to the creation of new categories for effects that are currently classified as "others." If language skills allow, it would be desirable to extend the search to Spanish or Chinese speaking areas, for example, as Chinese (Mandarin) and Spanish are among the most widely spoken natural languages in the world.

In addition, the results of our systematic literature review show that the effects of empathetic leadership are predominantly positive. It therefore seems appropriate to make efforts to promote empathy in leaders. Against this background, we encourage researchers to provide an up-to-date overview of empirically proven training options used to encourage and support leaders in implementing empathy in their professional contexts. If this overview turns out to be insufficient, it makes sense to foster the development of dedicated training programs or interventions that build on insights from recent learning research.

5.3 Managerial recommendations

Our review also offers some relevant practical implications that could be of benefit to three different groups of stakeholders. First, as probably expected, the recommendations are aimed at leaders. Leaders should be aware of their leadership practice and recognize empathy as an important part of it. Given the versatile potential for themselves, their followers, and their teams, leaders should actively seek to integrate empathy into their daily actions. In enabling leaders to do this, several authors of our included studies (Babalola et al. 2022; Bradley and Campbell 2016; Cornelis et al. 2013; Greenbaum et al. 2021; Holt et al. 2021; Li et al. 2019; Lloyd et al. 2017; Madlock 2013; Metz et al. 2014; Meyer et al. 2016; Ni et al. 2022; Patient and Skarlicki 2010; Qin et al. 2018; Scott et al. 2010; Sosik et al. 2019; van Woerkom and de Reuver 2009; Whiteside and Barclay 2016; Young et al. 2017) highlight the importance of training programs. However, the responsibilities for organizing such training sessions are often not clearly stated in the studies. Instead, the authors, for example, refer to the "companies" (Voegtlin et al. 2020, p. 428) in general, or they broadly speak of "organisational practitioners" (Li et al. 2019, p. 1015). Only Scott et al. (2010) and van Woerkom and de Reuver (2009) explicitly identify the human resources department and HR managers as key stakeholders in this context. We align with the authors' perspective and emphasize the important role of HR managers. They should monitor the market for empathy training programs, select appropriate ones, and make them available to leaders as needed. In this way, HR managers can serve as a competent point of contact for leaders, especially in contributing to the implementation of behavioral empathy into practice. Finally, it is important to mention that Ni and colleagues see "empathy as part of culture building" (Ni et al. 2022, p. 21). From our point of view, this concept bears particular scope of action for members of the management board. Only if board members live a culture of empathy can they act as good role models, showing leaders that empathy is valued in their organizations and encouraging them to practice it.

6 Conclusion

The present article collects and systematizes the current literature on the effects of empathetic leaders in organizations and provides an aggregated overview of research in this area. Following a systematic literature approach, we reviewed 28 articles reporting on 42 empirical studies relevant to our research questions published between 2009 and 2022. After a dense outline of the basic theoretical concepts, we carefully reported on the methodology applied. We then developed a category system that thematically synthesizes the different effects of empathetic leaders and also indicates who is affected by these effects. This category system is the main contribution of our article, as it provides the systematic overview of empirically proven effects that has been lacking until now and, thus, offers a clear starting point for further research. Finally, we derived both theoretical and practical implications by outlining promising areas for future research on the one hand and offering managerial recommendations for leaders, HR managers, and board members on the other hand.

Funding Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

Data availability All data generated and analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Competing interests The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

References

Arnaud A, Schminke M (2012) The ethical climate and context of organizations: a comprehensive model. Organ Sci 23:1767–1780. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1110.0698

Aronson E, Wilson TD, Akert RM (2008) Sozialpsychologie [Social psychology], 4., aktualisierte Aufl., [Nachdr.]. Pearson Studium, München

Ashforth BE, Harrison SH, Corley KG (2008) Identification in organizations: an examination of four fundamental questions. J Manag 34:325–374. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308316059

*Babalola MT, Jordan SL, Ren S et al (2022) How and when perceptions of top management bottom-line mentality inhibit supervisors' servant leadership behavior. J Manag 49:1662–1694. https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063221094263

Barbuto JE, Gottfredson RK, Searle TP (2014) An examination of emotional intelligence as an antecedent of servant leadership. J Leadersh Organ Stud 21:315–323. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051814531826

Barbuto JE, Wheeler DW (2006) Scale development and construct clarification of servant leadership. Group Organ Manag 31:300–326. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601106287091

Baron L, Parent É (2015) Developing authentic leadership within a training context: three phenomena supporting the individual development process. J Leadersh Organ Stud 22:37–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051813519501

Barrett-Lennard GT (1981) The empathy cycle: refinement of a nuclear concept. J Couns Psychol 28:91–100. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.28.2.91

Bass BM (1985) Leadership and performance beyond expectations. The Free Press, New York

Bass BM, Avolio BJ, Jung DI, Berson Y (2003) Predicting unit performance by assessing transformational and transactional leadership. J Appl Psychol 88:207–218. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.207

Batchelder L, Brosnan M, Ashwin C (2017) The development and validation of the Empathy Components Questionnaire (ECQ). PLoS ONE 12:e0169185. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0169185

Batson CD (1987) Prosocial motivation: Is it ever truly altruistic? In: Berkowitz L (ed) Advances in experimental social psychology. Academic Press, New York, pp 65–122

Batson CD (1991) The altruism question: towards a social–psychological answer. Erlbaum, Hillsdale

Batson CD (2008) Empathy-induced altruism motivation. Paper presented at the inaugural Herzliya Symposium on Prosocial Motives, Emotions, and Behavior, Herzliya, Israel

Batson CD (2009) These things called empathy: Eight related but distinct phenomena. In: Decety J, Ickes W (eds) The social neuroscience of empathy. The MIT Press, Cambridge, pp 3–16

Batson CD (2011) Altruism in humans. Oxford University Press, New York

Batson CD, Moran T (1999) Empathy-induced altruism in a prisoner's dilemma. Eur J Soc Psychol 29:909–924. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199911)29:7%3c909::AID-EJSP965%3e3.0.CO;2-L

*Blader SL, Rothman NB (2014) Paving the road to preferential treatment with good intentions: empathy, accountability and fairness. J Exp Soc Psychol 50:65–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.09.001

*Bradley GL, Campbell AC (2016) Managing difficult workplace conversations: goals, strategies, and outcomes. Int J Bus Commun 53:443–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488414525468

Brown ME, Treviño LK, Harrison DA (2005) Ethical leadership: a social learning perspective for construct development and testing. Organ Behav Hum Decis Process 97:117–134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002

Chartrand TL, van Baaren R (2009) Chapter 5 Human mimicry. In: Zanna MP (ed) Advances in experimental social psychology. Elsevier Academic Press, pp 219–274. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)00405-X

Chun R (2005) Ethical character and virtue of organizations: an empirical assessment and strategic implications. J Bus Ethics 57:269–284. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-004-6591-2

Clark MA, Robertson MM, Young S (2019) "I feel your pain": a critical review of organizational research on empathy. J Organ Behav 40:166–192. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2348

Cloninger CR, Przybeck TR, Svakic DM, Wetzel RD (1994) The temperament and character inventory (TCI): a guide to its development and use. Center for Psychobiology of Personality, St. Louis, MO

Coke JS, Batson CD, McDavis K (1978) Empathic mediation of helping: a two-stage model. J Pers Soc Psychol 36:752–766. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.36.7.752

Colquitt JA (2001) On the dimensionality of organizational justice: a construct validation of a measure. J Appl Psychol 86:386–400. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.386

*Cornelis I, Van Hiel A, De Cremer D, Mayer DM (2013) When leaders choose to be fair: follower belongingness needs and leader empathy influences leaders' adherence to procedural fairness rules. J Exp Soc Psychol 49:605–613. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.02.016

Costigan JL, Schmeidler MA (1984) Exploring supportive and defensive communication climates. In: Pfeiffer JW, Goodstein LD (eds) The 1984 handbook for group facilitators. University Associates, San Diego, pp 112–114

Cuff BMP, Brown SJ, Taylor L, Howat DJ (2016) Empathy: a review of the concept. Emot Rev 8:144–153. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073914558466

Davis MH (1980) A multidimensional approach to individual differences in empathy. J Pers Soc Psychol 10:1–19

Davis MH (1983) Measuring individual differences in empathy: evidence for a multidimensional approach. J Pers Soc Psychol 44:113–126. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.44.1.113

Davis MH (1996) Empathy: a social psychological approach. Westview Press, Boulder CO

Davis MH, Oathout HA (1987) Maintenance of satisfaction in romantic relationships: empathy and relational competence. J Pers Soc Psychol 53:397–410. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.53.2.397

Decety J, Jackson PL (2004) The functional architecture of human empathy. Behav Cogn Neurosci Rev 3:71–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534582304267187

Denyer D, Tranfield D (2009) Producing a systematic review. In: Buchanan DA, Bryman A (eds) The Sage handbook of organizational research methods. Sage, London, pp 671–689

*Dietz J, Kleinlogel EP (2014) Wage cuts and managers' empathy: how a positive emotion can contribute to positive organizational ethics in difficult times. J Bus Ethics 119:461–472. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1836-6

Drollinger T, Comer LB, Warrington PT (2006) Development and validation of the active empathetic listening scale. Psychol Mark 23:161–180. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20105

Duan C, Hill CE (1996) The current state of empathy research. J Couns Psychol 43:261–274. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.43.3.261

Eisenberg N (2000) Emotion, regulation, and moral development. Annu Rev Psychol 51:665–697. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.51.1.665

Eisenberg N, Fabes RA, Miller PA et al (1989) Relation of sympathy and personal distress to prosocial behavior: a multimethod study. J Pers Soc Psychol 57:55–66. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.1.55

Eisenberg N, Strayer J (1987) Critical issues in the study of empathy. In: Eisenberg N, Strayer J (eds) Empathy and its development. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp 3–16

Förster C, Paparella C, Duchek S, Güttel WH (2022) Leading in the paradoxical world of crises: how leaders navigate through crises. Schmalenbach J Bus Res 74:631–657. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41471-022-00147-7

Frank K, Nadales MJV, Robertson P, Angermann M (2010) Reliable real-time recognition of motion-related human activities using MEMS inertial sensors. Paper presented at ION GNSS, Portland, OR

Frost P (2007) Toxic emotions at work and what you can do about them. Harvard Business School Press, Boston

Gentry WA, Clark MA, Young SF et al (2015) How displaying empathic concern may differentially predict career derailment potential for women and men leaders in Australia. Leadersh Q 26:641–653. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.05.003

Graham JW (1991) Servant-leadership in organizations: Inspirational and moral. Leadersh Q 2:105–119. https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(91)90025-W

*Greenbaum RL, Babalola M, Quade MJ et al (2021) Moral burden of bottom-line pursuits: how and when perceptions of top management bottom-line mentality inhibit supervisors' ethical leadership practices. J Bus Ethics 174:109–123. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04546-w

Greenberg J (1987) A taxonomy of organizational justice theories. Acad Manag Rev 12:9. https://doi.org/10.2307/257990

Gregory JB, Levy PE (2010) Employee coaching relationships: enhancing construct clarity and measurement. Coaching Int J Theor Res Pr 3:109–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2010.502901

*Gregory JB, Levy PE (2011) It's not me, it's you: a multilevel examination of variables that impact employee coaching relationships. Consult Psychol J: Pr Res 63:67–88. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024152

*Hahm S-W (2017) Communication strategies of online-based leadership and members' work engagement and job burnout. J Internet Comput Serv 18:103–112. https://doi.org/10.7472/JKSII.2017.18.5.103

Hogan R (1969) Development of an empathy scale. J Consult Clin Psychol 33:307–316. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0027580

*Holt L, Bobocel DR, Chen V (2021) Delivering bad news fairly: higher construal level promotes interactional justice enactment through perspective taking. J Organ Behav 42:708–725. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2497

Holt S, Marques J (2012) Empathy in leadership: Appropriate or misplaced? An empirical study on a topic that is asking for attention. J Bus Ethics 105:95–105. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0951-5

Hunter JC (2004) The world's most powerful leadership principle: how to become a servant leader. Crown Business, New York

*Jancenelle VE (2021) Executive cues of organizational virtue and market performance: creating value during times of earnings uncertainty. Bus Soc Rev 126:193–209. https://doi.org/10.1111/basr.12235

*Jit R, Sharma CS, Kawatra M (2017) Healing a broken spirit: role of servant leadership. Vikalpa 42:80–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090917703754

Johnson JA, Cheek JM, Smither R (1983) The structure of empathy. J Pers Soc Psychol 45:1299–1312. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.45.6.1299

Joseph DL, Dhanani LY, Shen W et al (2015) Is a happy leader a good leader? A meta-analytic investigation of leader trait affect and leadership. Leadersh Q 26:557–576. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.04.001

Journal of Business Ethics (2024) In: Aims and Scope. https://link.springer.com/journal/10551/aims-and-scope. Accessed 14 Feb 2024

Kalshoven KH, Den Hartog DN, De Hoogh AHB (2013) Ethical leadership and follower helping and courtesy: moral awareness and empathic concern as moderators. Appl Psychol 62:211–235. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2011.00483.x

Kellett JB, Humphrey RH, Sleeth RG (2006) Empathy and the emergence of task and relations leaders. Leadersh Q 17:146–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.12.003

Klann G (2007) Building character: Strengthening the heart of good leadership. Wiley, San Francisco

Kock N, Mayfield M, Mayfield J et al (2019) Empathetic leadership: how leader emotional support and understanding influences follower performance. J Leadersh Organ Stud 26:217–236. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051818806290

König A, Graf-Vlachy L, Bundy J, Little LM (2020) A blessing and a curse: how CEOs' trait empathy affects their management of organizational crises. Acad Manag Rev 45:130–153. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2017.0387

Koopman J, Conway JM, Dimotakis N et al (2021) Does CWB repair negative affective states, or generate them? Examining the moderating role of trait empathy. J Appl Psychol 106:1493–1516. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000837

Lawrence EJ, Shaw P, Baker D et al (2004) Measuring empathy: reliability and validity of the Empathy Quotient. Psychol Med 34:911–920. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291703001624

Lazarus RS (1991) Emotion and adaptation. Oxford University Press, New York. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195069945.001.0001

Lazarus RS (1999) Stress and emotion: a new synthesis. Springer, New York

*Li YN, Law KS, Yan M (2019) Other-caring or other-critical? A contagious effect of leaders' emotional triads on subordinates' performance. Asia Pac J Manag 36:995–1021. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-018-9617-5

Liden RC, Wayne SJ, Zhao H, Henderson D (2008) Servant leadership: development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. Leadersh Q 19:161–177. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.01.006

*Lloyd KJ, Boer D, Voelpel SC (2017) From listening to leading: toward an understanding of supervisor listening within the framework of leader-member exchange theory. Int J Bus Commun 54:431–451. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488415572778

Locke EA (1976) The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In: Dunnette MD (ed) Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology. Rand McNally, Chicago, pp 1297–1349

*Madlock PE (2013) The influence of motivational language in the technologically mediated realm of telecommuters. Human Res Manag J 23:196–210. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2012.00191.x

Mael F, Ashforth BE (1992) Alumni and their alma mater: a partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. J Organ Behav 13:103–123. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030130202

Maxwell JC (2014) Good leaders ask great questions: Your foundation for successful leadership, 1st edn. Center Street, New York

Mayfield J, Mayfield M (2018) Motivating language theory: effective leader talk in the workplace. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66930-4

Mayfield J, Mayfield M, Kopf J (1995) Motivating language: exploring theory with scale development. J Bus Commun 32:329–344. https://doi.org/10.1177/002194369503200402

Mayfield M, Mayfield J (2012) Effective performance feedback for learning in organizations and organizational learning. Dev Learn Organ 26:15–18. https://doi.org/10.1108/14777281211189128

McNeely BL, Meglino BM (1994) The role of dispositional and situational antecedents in prosocial organizational behavior: an examination of the intended beneficiaries of prosocial behavior. J Appl Psychol 79:836–844. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.6.836

Meinecke AL, Kauffeld S (2018) Engaging the hearts and minds of followers: leader empathy and language style matching during appraisal interviews. J Bus Psychol 34:485–501. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-018-9554-9

*Metz I, Brown M, Cregan C, Kulik CT (2014) "Toxin handling" and well-being: the case of the human resources manager. Eur J Work Organ Psychol 23:248–262. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2012.739724

*Meyer B, Burtscher MJ, Jonas K et al (2016) What good leaders actually do: micro-level leadership behaviour, leader evaluations, and team decision quality: corrigendum. Eur J Work Organ Psychol 25:i. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2016.1204184

Miranda M (2021) Tips for employers during a pandemic. flexible hours, remote and hybrid work appeal to both employer and employees. Caribb Bus 7:8–11

Newstead T, Dawkins S, Macklin R, Martin A (2021) We don't need more leaders: we need more good leaders. Advancing a virtues-based approach to leader(ship) development. Leadersh Q 32:1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101312

*Ni D, Zheng X, Liang LH (2022) How and when leader mindfulness influences team member interpersonal behavior: evidence from a quasi-field experiment and a field survey. Hum Relat 76:1940–1965. https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267221128571

Novicevic MM, Harvey MG, Ronald M, Brown-Radford JA (2006) Authentic leadership: a historical perspective. J Leadersh Organ Stud 13:64–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/10717919070130010901

O'Malley A, Gregory J (2011) Don't be such a downer: using positive psychology to enhance the value of negative feedback. Psychol-Manag J 14:247–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/10887156.2011.621776

Organ DW (1988) Organizational citizenship behavior: the good soldier syndrome. Lexington Books, Lexington
*Patient DL, Skarlicki DP (2010) Increasing interpersonal and informational justice when communicating negative news: the role of the manager's empathic concern and moral development. J Manag 36:555–578. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308328509
Paulus C (2009) Der Saarbrücker Persönlichkeitsfragebogen SPF(IRI) zur Messung von Empathie: Psychometrische Evaluation der deutschen Version des Interpersonal Reactivity Index [The Saarbrücken Personality Questionnaire SPF(IRI) for measuring empathy: Psychometric evaluation of the German version of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index]. https://doi.org/10.23668/PSYCHARCHIVES.9249
Payne GT, Brigham KH, Broberg JC et al (2011) Organizational virtue orientation and family firms. Bus Ethics Q 21:257–285. https://doi.org/10.5840/beq201121216
*Qin X, Huang M, Johnson RE et al (2018) The short-lived benefits of abusive supervisory behavior for actors: an investigation of recovery and work engagement. Acad Manag J 61:1951–1975. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.1325
Richard EM, Bupp CP, Alzaidalsharief RG (2016) Supervisor empathy moderates the negative effects of customer injustice. In: Ashkanasy NM, Härtel CEJ, Zerbe WJ (eds) Research on emotion in organizations. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, Bingley, pp 117–140
Rogers CR (1951) Client-centered therapy: its current practice, implications, and theory. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston
Rogers CR (1975) Empathic: an unappreciated way of being. Couns Psychol 5:2–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/001100007500500202
Sadri G, Weber TJ, Gentry WA (2011) Empathic emotion and leadership performance: an empirical analysis across 38 countries. Leadersh Q 22:818–830. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.07.005
*Scott BA, Colquitt JA, Paddock EL, Judge TA (2010) A daily investigation of the role of manager empathy on employee well-being. Organ Behav Hum Decis Process 113:127–140. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2010.08.001
*Sharma E, Bagozzi RP (2022) Moral reactions to bribery are fundamentally different for managers witnessing and managers committing such acts: tests of cognitive-emotional explanations of bribery. J Bus Ethics 177:95–124. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04743-1
*Simon LS, Rosen CC, Gajendran RS et al (2022) Pain or gain? Understanding how trait empathy impacts leader effectiveness following the provision of negative feedback. J Appl Psychol 107:279–297. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000882
Singer T (2006) The neuronal basis and ontogeny of empathy and mind reading: review of literature and implications for future research. Neurosci Biobehav Rev 30:855–863. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2006.06.011
Smith CA, Organ DW, Near JP (1983) Organizational citizenship behavior: its nature and antecedents. J Appl Psychol 68:653–663. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.68.4.653
*Sosik JJ, Chun JU, Ete Z et al (2019) Self-control puts character into action: examining how leader character strengths and ethical leadership relate to leader outcomes. J Bus Ethics 160:765–781. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3908-0
Stern S (2019) How to: be a better leader. Macmillan Publishers, New York
Sullivan JJ (1988) Three roles of language in motivation theory. Acad Manag Rev 13:104. https://doi.org/10.2307/258358
Sun P-C, Pan F-T, Ho C-W (2016) Does motivating language matter in leader–subordinate communication? Chinese J Commun 9:264–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2016.1206029
Tangney JP, Stuewig J, Mashek DJ (2007) Moral emotions and moral behavior. Annu Rev Psychol 58:345–372. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070145
Van der Zee KI, Van Oudenhoven JP (2001) The multicultural personality questionnaire: reliability and validity of self- and other ratings of multicultural effectiveness. J Res Pers 35:278–288. https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.2001.2320
*van Woerkom M, de Reuver RSM (2009) Predicting excellent management performance in an intercultural context: a study of the influence of multicultural personality on transformational leadership and performance. Int J Hum Resour Manag 20:2013–2029. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190903175589
*Voegtlin C, Frisch C, Walther A, Schwab P (2020) Theoretical development and empirical examination of a three-roles model of responsible leadership. J Bus Ethics 167:411–431. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04155-2

von Rosenstiel L (2009) Grundlagen der Führung [Fundamentals of leadership]. In: von Rosenstiel L, Domsch ME, Regnet E (eds) Führung von Mitarbeitern [Leadership of employees]. Schäffer-Poeschel, Stuttgart, pp 3–27

Walter H (2012) Social cognitive neuroscience of empathy: concepts, circuits, and genes. Emot Rev 4:9–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073911421379

Watson D, Clark LA, Tellegen A (1988) Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: the PANAS scales. J Pers Soc Psychol 54:1063–1070. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.54.6.1063

Weidenbach B (2021) New work: Homeoffice & mobiles Arbeiten. Statista Dossierplus zur neuen Arbeitswelt in Zeiten von Corona [New work: Home office & mobile working. Statista Dossierplus on the new world of work in times of Corona]. https://de-statista-com.wwwdb.dbod.de/statistik/studie/id/86464/dokument/homeoffice-und-mobiles-arbeiten. Accessed 12 Aug 2023

Weiss HM, Cropanzano R (1996) Affective events theory: a theoretical discussion of the structure, causes and consequences of affective experiences at work. In: Staw BM, Cummings LL (eds) Research in organizational behavior: an annual series of analytical essays and critical reviews. JAI Press, Greenwich, pp 1–74

*Whiteside DB, Barclay LJ (2016) The face of fairness: self-awareness as a means to promote fairness among managers with low empathy. J Bus Ethics 137:721–730. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2357-7

*Young SF, Richard EM, Moukarzel RG et al (2017) How empathic concern helps leaders in providing negative feedback: a two-study examination. J Occup Organ Psychol 90:535–558. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12184

*Yue CA, Men LR, Ferguson MA (2021) Examining the effects of internal communication and emotional culture on employees' organizational identification. Int J Bus Commun 58:169–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329488420914066

Yukl G (2013) Leadership in organizations, 8th edn., global edn. Pearson, Boston Munich [u.a]

Zaki J, Bolger N, Ochsner K (2008) It takes two: the interpersonal nature of empathic accuracy. Psychol Sci 19:399–404. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02099.x

*References marked with an asterisk indicate studies included in the literature review.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.