Article

Empathetic Leadership: How Leader Emotional Support and Understanding Influences Follower Performance

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Abstract

This article presents a theory of empathetic leadership and its initial test. Empathetic leadership provides a model of how leader understanding and support improves follower behaviors and affective states. For this article, we explored the link between empathetic leadership and follower performance. Specifically, we tested the causal processes by which empathetic language influences follower performance. These processes include follower job satisfaction and innovation. Findings support model hypotheses and provide preliminary causal support for the model.

Keywords

leadership, empathy, innovation, job satisfaction, job performance

> I think we all have empathy. We may not have enough courage to display it
>
> —Maya Angelou (Murphy, 2013)

People need support and understanding (empathy) in all life aspects—even at work (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Outside of work, family and friends provide the support. At work, a person can turn to coworkers and colleagues. But leaders can give empathy as well. By doing so, leaders create a powerful bond that encourages and sustains followers in endeavors needed for improving workplace performance (Bell & Hall, 1954; Holt & Marques, 2012). Empathy—the ability to understand and appreciate another person's experiences while providing emotional support and a feeling of security (Long & Schultz, 1973; Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2010)—increases job satisfaction and feelings of security that support people trying innovative ways to accomplish daily tasks (Danish, 1969; Long & Schultz, 1973; Mahsud et al., 2010). With this study, we examine the link between leader empathy and follower performance and examine *how* leader empathy influences follower performance. Specifically, we found that leader empathy increases performance by increasing follower job satisfaction and fostering innovation.

To explain the empathy–performance link, we develop a new leadership model—empathetic leadership. Empathetic leadership focuses on the emotional relationship between a leader and follower—how much a leader understands a follower's work situation, invests in emotional understanding, and provides emotional security for the follower. The need for such a model has increased as workplace performance increasingly relies on employee cognitive and emotional labor.

We develop our model in the following sections: empathetic leadership and follower outcomes, our methodology and results, and our conclusions and further discussion.

Empathetic Leadership, Workplace Outcomes, and Causal Mechanisms

Empathy and Leadership: A Brief History

The empathetic leadership model arises from existing studies on workplace emotions (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Goleman, 2007), leader support for these emotions (Cornelis, Van Hiel, De Cremer, & Mayer, 2013; Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2006), and motivating language theory (J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017b; Sullivan, 1988). Management scholars have recognized the role of leader emotional support at least since the Hawthorne studies, and have been developing studies on emotional support since the Ohio State and Michigan University studies (Miner, 2002, 2003). Since these works, evidence has mounted that

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emotional support improves workplace outcomes (Yrie, Hartman, & Galle, 2003). However, this research stream has also highlighted gaps that need addressing (Miner, 2002). Specifically, most studies use a broad approach to examine leader emotional use—an understandable approach while examining general relationship outlines. We now need, however, a more nuanced approach to leader emotional expressions it we want to better understand this support and its effects.

To develop our new approach, we need to first look at existing theories addressing more humanistic and empathetic leadership approaches. As mentioned earlier, the studies at Western Electric's Hawthorne plant (Roethlisberger, Dickson, Wright, Pforzheimer, & Western Electric Company, 1939), brought attention to how human interactions could influence people's output. While questions remain about what the studies revealed (Jung & Lee, 2015; Wickström & Bendix, 2000), one cannot deny these studies created a new way to look at leadership—the idea that leaders must pay attention to followers' emotional needs as well as directing and coordinating follower activities (Gale, 2004; Sundstrom, Mcintyre, Halfhill, & Richards, 2000).

The Ohio State studies on initiating structure and consideration behaviors (Tremblay, Gaudet, & Parent-Rocheleau, 2018; Weissenberg & Kavanagh, 1972)—and the closely related concept of concern for task and concern for individual (Miner, 2005)—moved the human relations movement from a more general idea of leaders acknowledging follower emotional needs, to a more concrete view of how this process operated. When leaders displayed consideration behaviors, that they cared about a follower's well-being in the workplace, this concern prompted improved workplace outcomes. In fact, Judge, Piccolo, and Ilies (2004) found that leader consideration behavior accounted for nearly three times as much variance with worker outcomes as initiating structure behaviors (an r^2 of 0.23 vs. 0.08).

More recent work has built upon these findings and developed theories examining leadership that incorporates follower emotional and spiritual needs. Servant leadership (Barbuto, Gottfredson, & Searle, 2014; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006) has perhaps become the most prominent of these theories. While mostly focusing on placing follower concerns before their own, servant leaders must also care for followers' emotional well-being, and express these concerns in concrete communicative ways (Bakar & McCann, 2018; Gutierrez-Wirsching, Mayfield, Mayfield, & Wang, 2015; J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 1995). Similarly, authentic leadership (Baron & Parent, 2015; Novicevic, Harvey, Ronald, & Brown-Radford, 2006) requires that leaders express their emotional support and concern for followers' well-being and emotional support.

In parallel with these leader theory developments, researchers were looking at ethics in a new way that relates to leader empathy. This new view—ethics of care or feminist ethics—puts forth that leaders must take into account how vulnerable and dependent a follower was on a leader, and that leaders had greater responsibility to followers who could be harmed more by poor leader actions (Adhariani, Sciulli, & Clift, 2017a; Peter, 2016). This view also brought up that a leader must consider a follower's contextual circumstances such as her or his emotional state and needs (Adhariani, Sciulli, & Clift, 2017b; Liu & Buzzanell, 2004). With this focus, ethics of care provided a formal statement that leaders must be aware of and nurture a follower's emotional well-being.

As in ethics literature, a communication theory emerged that explicitly addressed how leaders incorporate emotional expressions—motivating language theory (J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2006, 2010, 2012; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2016b, 2017a). Motivating language theory research shows that communicating support for a follower's emotions has a positive influence on follower outcomes (Gutierrez-Wirsching et al., 2015; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009) in a wide variety of settings (Holmes, 2012; Holmes & Parker, 2017; Luca & Gray, 2004; Madlock & Sexton, 2015; Sharbrough, Simmons, & Cantrill, 2006). However, empathetic leadership goes beyond this research stream and focuses on *how* leaders empathetic support influences follower performance.

These theories, however, do not specifically address how leaders engage with and support followers' workplace emotions. Empathetic leadership proposes that leaders manage better when they have an understanding of a follower's emotional state, express this understanding, and support their follower's handling of these emotions. Because of this support, followers will feel better about their work situation and, in turn, perform better. While this article only tests the outcomes of empathetic leadership—to determine if the model provides viable predictions (Dubin, 1978; Lynham, 2002)—we feel it is useful to provide our thoughts on how empathetic leadership emerges.

A Theoretical Framework for Empathetic Leadership

First, some level of empathy (both as a need and as an expressed behavior) seems to be present in all people. Evolutionary psychology and leadership studies have shown that empathy provides a bedrock behavior for everyone (Ehin, 1998; Illies, Arvey, & Bouchard, 2006) and that leader use of empathy in the workplace creates positive states in followers (Gillet, 2010; Owens & Hekman, 2012) and the leaders themselves (Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006). From an evolutionary perspective, empathy provides a competitive advantage because it helps someone predict who he or she can trust, how to interact with that person, and who to avoid because of they pose a possible threat. It also provided a means for people to connect and develop

networks of partners who could trust each other to cooperate in mutual survival (Axelrod, 2009; Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Dunbar, Barrett, & Lycett, 2005). Such understanding proved valuable to our distant ancestors who were creating larger networks for food gathering and protection—without good relationships, individuals could find themselves isolated and vulnerable to a harsh environment or supporting free-riders who drained the group's resources. Empathy—the expression of emotional support—also acted as a signal that someone was likely trustworthy and could be counted on to consider someone else's best interests rather than merely her or his own (Axelrod, 2009; Dunbar et al., 2005; Wilson, 2000).

Higher empathy also allows leaders to better understand and respond to a follower's needs in a way that furthers performance. A leader who better understands and anticipates a follower can decide what management technique will improve poor performance or enhance good performance (Gavin, Green, & Fairhurst, 1995; Westerman, Reno, & Heuett, 2018). Use of appropriate feedback to followers will give a worker greater confidence in what he or she needs to accomplish and specifics on how to accomplish the tasks, thus reducing role ambiguity (House & Rizzo, 1972; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012a; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970) and creating greater self-efficacy and confidence in the follower (Bandura, 1977; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). These improved affective states will increase workers' feelings of safety and enable them to feel comfortable in expending greater work effort and trying creative ways of performing job tasks (M. Mayfield, 2009a, 2009b). Thus, leader empathy leads to two sources of workplace support—emotional and instructional.

For emotional support, managers engage in empathetic leadership when they validate a follower's work experiences, show concern for a follower's emotional expressions, and affirm a follower's workplace security. These activities arise from understanding a follower's situation and personal work needs: a leader's empathy with a follower. The leader's empathy promotes bonding with the follower and creates a sense of psychological safety and support for the follower (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012b). These positive affective states increase job satisfaction, motivation, and increased workplace effort.

Empathetic Leadership and Other Leadership Theories

Since empathetic leadership draws from existing leadership theories, it may help to examine the similarities between related leadership models and specify how it differs and adds to such theories. To do so, we will look at three theories related to empathetic leadership: leader–member exchange (LMX), servant leadership, and initiating structure and consideration.

LMX (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Lloyd, Boer, & Voelpel, 2017) provides a good starting point for examining empathetic leadership's relationship to other leadership theories. Briefly, LMX models how leaders and followers develop workplace bonds by going above and beyond normal workplace requirements. Followers engage in extra-role behavior while leaders provide followers with greater latitude and autonomy (Cashman, Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1976; Geertshuis, Morrison, & Cooper-Thomas, 2015). To achieve this bond, empathy must play a role, however, at its heart LMX remains an exchange process, even if not a monetary one. Followers go beyond the work contract and leaders provide rewards not required by the work contract.

Empathetic leadership, however, does not focus on an exchange relationship. Empathetic leaders genuinely care for followers regardless of workplace efforts. In fact, a leader might demonstrate empathy most for followers that have trouble in their workplace situation, and it would only be after such an expression that the worker's performance would improve—in contrast to how most high-LMX relationships occur only after a follower has shown the willingness to perform extra-role behaviors (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, Scandura, & Graen, 1986).

The nonexchange aspect of empathetic leadership links it to servant leadership since servant leadership focuses on how a leader gives primacy to her or his followers needs (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017; Russell & Stone, 2002). At their core, empathetic and servant leaders understand that workers' emotional needs must have consideration and attention. However, the theories differ on important points. First, servant leadership was founded as and continues to act as an ethical framework—it provides a statement of how leaders should treat their followers (Mikkelson, Sloan, & Hesse, 2017; Russell & Stone, 2002).

In contrast to servant leadership's normative focus, empathetic leadership acts as a more descriptive theory about how leaders behave, with normative views being restricted to how a leader should act to achieve a given goal (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Tuomo, 2006). Similarly, servant leadership places follower needs and outcomes as paramount—even above achieving leader or organizational goals while empathetic leadership remains silent on how to balance the needs of these three stakeholders (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Sarkar, 2016). From this viewpoint, one can view empathetic leadership as taking a more collaborative approach—leaders must take into account follower needs, but they must also satisfy organizational, follower, and their own needs. Finally, empathetic leadership, as with LMX, takes a more dyadic approach than servant leadership. While servant leadership allows for variation in how a leader achieves satisfying follower needs, it still classifies leaders into servant or nonservant categories. Empathetic leadership views each leader–follower relationship as distinct and following a different developmental path and outcome.

Similarly, the theory of initiating structure and consideration (Judge et al., 2004; Weissenberg & Kavanagh, 1972) differs from empathetic leadership in that it focuses on a leader's general management style rather than a dyadic relationship. However, initiating structure and consideration (ISC) remains the theory most similar to empathetic leadership. Both theories examine how leader understanding of followers can influence follower outcomes. The major difference comes from ISC's central tenet that a leader must strongly employ both empathy and structure to achieve positive results. Empathetic leadership, on the other hand, holds that a leader's expression of empathy can improve worker affective states and, through these states, improve workplace outcomes. By focusing on empathy rather than a range of behaviors, empathetic leadership gives us the opportunity to explore the role of emotional support in detail, and how this emotional support can elicit better workplace outcomes. Also, ISC focuses on creating a positive work environment—empathetic leadership focuses on understanding a follower. The focus of empathetic leadership should lead to a better workplace environment, but it differs from ISC's scope.

As these paragraphs show, while empathetic leadership draws from and rests on existing leadership theories, it provides a unique insight into the leadership process. Specifically, it provides a pragmatic, descriptive model of a dyadic process that focuses on how leaders create empathetic bonding with their followers.

Empathetic Leadership: A Unifying Description

As noted in the previous sections, empathetic leadership draws from existing management and evolutionary psychology research and has similarities to existing leadership theories while still adding to our understanding of leadership phenomenon. This section develops these ideas into a theoretical framework that helps us understand the phenomena and make predictions about how it should operate in the workplace. Drawing on theory definitions of such researchers as Dubin (1978), Weick (1995), Wacker (1998), and Sutton and Staw (1995), a theory provides conceptual definitions of the constructs used in the theory, describes the links between these constructs, make predictions about how the theory should operate, and discusses the limitations or boundaries of the theory. This section will lay out a theory meeting these criteria.

Specifically, since we developed the basic model rationale, defined major constructs, and presented empirical support for the expected links earlier in the article, this section will explore how the process should unfold over time. While we will use a cross-sectional method to examine the model, presenting a theory as a temporal process helps better understand a model and provides a richer ground for theory testing than a static theory representation (Holton & Lowe, 2007; J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2013; Weick, 2005; Wilensky & Rand, 2015).

First, empathetic leadership should operate mainly through a signaling process (Scott-Phillips, 2008). As such, we can begin with how a leader acts toward a given follower when the follower experiences a change. This change situation may come about because the follower has entered into a new relationship with the leader (as when a follower joins a work group, or a leader takes over managing a team), the follower's circumstances have changes that necessitate different levels of empathetic support, or because the leader's own situation changes where he or she expresses a different level of empathy. While each of these three circumstances could moderate the effect of empathetic leadership, at this point in the theory's development we hesitate to make specific predictions about how the manner of eliciting empathetic leadership would moderate such relationships. However, enumerating these possibilities provide a starting place for describing how the process should work.

By definition, empathy comes from understanding someone's situation and the willingness to care about the situation. As such, how much empathetic leadership someone uses should come from a combination of these two factors and can vary between leaders and between the followers of a given leader. For example, a leader should be able to employ more empathetic leadership with followers who have similar life experiences or are in situations the leader has also faced. This may lead to situations where leaders use less empathetic leadership with followers of a different gender or background. Such barriers can contribute to differences between leader (average) use of empathetic leadership since leaders can have higher or lower abilities (or desire) to understand followers' situations. These processes should lead to within (follower) and between (leader) differences. Testing such differences, however, should wait until the basics of the theory have been tested since multilevel analysis can create complications that obscure the main effects (Gumusluoglu, Karakitapoglu-Aygün, & Scandura, 2017; Henderson, Liden, Glibkowski, & Chaudhry, 2009; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009). Therefore, we will test for main effects, and propose that follow-up studies examine any multilevel process if evidence exists for the main effect.

A leader can express empathy through a combination of words and actions. Words would provide a strong initial signal that the leader cares for her or his follower and could elicit initial positive reactions. However, the leader must follow-up on expressing empathy through actions that support these expressions. For example, if a follower was experiencing problems sleeping because of a new infant in the house, a leader could express understanding of the followers' situation but would need to support these words with actions (perhaps by finding the worker a quiet, unused space to take short naps in during break times).

This expected two-step process also presents an intriguing possibility of deceptive empathetic leaders. We expect that using empathetic leadership requires effort (and resources). If a leader can obtain the advantages of empathetic leadership by sending false signals (pretending to understand or not following through with supportive behaviors), then such deceptive leaders can increase worker outcomes but not expend the same resources required of a true empathetic leader. With time, followers should discover such deception and revert to (the lower) performance levels of situations with nonempathetic leaders—or possibly poorer workplace outcomes since the leader's deceptive practice may harm to the follower's affective state. With this possibility, we can broadly classify leaders into empathetic (those who use high levels of empathetic leadership), callous (those who use low levels of empathetic leadership), and deceptive (those who pretend to use high levels of empathetic leadership). In the short run, empathetic and deceptive leaders would send similar signals to followers and should expect to obtain similar results. However, over time followers should see deceptive leaders for what they are and treat them as callous leaders. Therefore, a deceptive leader strategy should only have long run success in high turnover situations where new followers entered into the relationship on a regular basis. Once research has established the basic relationship between empathetic leadership and follower outcomes, studies should examine the relationship in longitudinal settings with various turnover rates to test this proposition.

Now that we have established some foundational ideas about how empathetic leadership operates, we can move to describing how we expect the empathetic leadership process to unfold. First, a follower has to present her or himself as needing empathy. Such a situation might occur if a follower experiences a work set-back or frustrations in completing a project and let the leader know about her or his problem. A leader might also seek to uncover such situations by regularly asking followers about their work situation. Once a leader becomes aware of a follower in need of empathetic leadership, he or she would express such support through communications (providing supportive encouragement or being willing to listen to the follower discuss her or his distress), actions (such as providing a follower with extra time or resources to complete a project), or a combination of both as necessary.

As the work relation between the leader and follower progresses, these leader actions signal a follower that the leader cares about the follower and activate positive follower affective states and increases follower trust in the leader. Through these empathetic practices, the leader expresses that he or she values and respects the follower's workplace needs and will help the follower to receive a fair share in return for the follower's efforts. Empathetic leadership also signals that leaders will help a follower when the worker has problems or cannot perform at her or his best. In short, that a leader will provide the worker aid when possible. More specifically, when a follower believes a leader understands and provides support, the follower will have lower stress, anxiety, and increased feelings of safety. While many potential affective improvements exist, a follower's job satisfaction provides a good proxy for and overall measure of someone's workplace mental state (Bures, Henderson, Mayfield, Mayfield, & Worley, 1995; Wilkin, 2013) and can act as a way to make an initial test of how empathetic leadership influences these states. (A later section of this article provides empirical evidence for the link between a leader's empathetic behavior and followers' job satisfaction, and Hypothesis 1 provides a formal statement.)

Empathetic leadership should also positively influence follower innovative behavior through one of two processes. First, empathetic leadership should increase a follower's attempts at innovation because the follower feels safer in taking risks and has less stress—two major factors in someone's creativity and innovation (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004; M. Mayfield, 2011). Such affective changes would be captured through a person's job satisfaction, and this construct should act as a mediator between empathetic leadership and follower innovation. (See Hypothesis 2 and related empirical support later in this article for more details on this link.) Therefore, we expect that once a follower's affective state increases, that follower should take more risks and undertake more innovative activities.

In addition to this mediated relationship, we expect empathetic leadership to moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and worker innovation. To understand why, we need to go back to the idea that a leader who understands a follower better (has more empathy with a follower) can better guide that follower to achieve better workplace innovations. So, an empathetic leader may suggest a follower with an analytic bent examine a problem from a statistical approach, while suggesting a follower with relationship building skills approach the problem by creating a task force to examine its different facets. A leader lacking this ability would more likely fall back on stock suggestions or ones that would work for the leader but not necessarily help the follower. Thus, empathetic leadership should act as a multiplier to moderate the link between follower affective states (such as job satisfaction) and worker innovation. Again, we provide empirical support and a formal statement of this relationship later in the article. This moderating effect should take place at the same time as a follower's improved affective states lead to increased innovation.

Empathetic leadership's positive influence on innovative behavior and job satisfaction/affective states should increase a follower's performance. Improved job satisfaction should promote the desire to perform well and more intrinsic motivation, while greater innovations should lead to more efficient and effective performance behaviors. As such, this

stage of the process acts as the end of the empathetic leadership process that we develop in our model.

The following list provides a recap of how we expect the empathetic leadership process to develop:

- A follower enters into a situation where empathy is needed
- The leader demonstrates empathy and understanding of a follower's situation
- The follower sees this demonstration as a signal that the leader values the follower's needs in addition to the leader's needs
- From this signal, the follower feels more positive toward the leader and the workplace in general (through reciprocity)
- The leader's empathy also helps reduce workplace stress and generate positive affective states
- The lowered stress and improved affective states increase a follower's job satisfaction
- The increased job satisfaction leads to increased work effort and willingness to take risks on innovative behaviors
- The increased job satisfaction leads to improved follower performance
- The leaders increased understanding of a worker's capabilities and situation (from an empathetic viewpoint of the worker) enables her or him to help guide the follower in more successful innovations
- More successful everyday innovations help the follower perform better

In terms of boundary conditions, the type of work a follower engages in could set limits on when empathetic leadership will and will not have an influence. For empathetic leadership to operate, a work must give a leader chances to observe when a follower needs empathetic support, time enough to understand the follower's situation, and the opportunity to implement empathetic leadership. As such, distributed workplace settings—where people work remotely (such as with telecommuting) or where most work contacts come from outside of an office (such as with commercial salespeople)—should blunt or obviate empathetic leadership. Similarly, a culture where coworkers obtain empathetic support from each other (rather than a leader) could act as a substitute for empathetic leadership. In such situations, the leader's empathetic use would not relate to the expected follower outcomes. At this stage of theoretical development, we will focus on a sample setting that does not include such limitations to test the main theory; however, future work should examine these boundary conditions.

We will explore specifics on how empathetic leadership should increase workplace outcomes in the next two sections by looking at empathetic leadership's influence on job satisfaction, innovation, and performance.

Empathetic Leadership and Follower Job Satisfaction

People need understanding and emotional support in all aspects of their lives. At work, a leader plays a powerful role in giving such support by expressing empathy with a follower (Cornelis et al., 2013). Affect improves through this positive emotional connection and knowing the other person respects their emotions. Empathetic leadership creates an emotional bond with followers and demonstrates that a leader cares about the follower as a person—not simply an organizational asset (Grant, 2013; J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009). By making these emotional connections, leaders help improve follower affect and positive feelings about the workplace (Long & Schultz, 1973; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009).

Ample evidence on related leader behaviors and follower outcomes support this idea. For example, in a longitudinal study, Winkler, Busch, Clasen, and Vowinkel (2015) found evidence for supervisors' use of social support and positive feedback on low-skilled workers' job satisfaction. Bono, Foldes, Vinson, and Muros (2007) found similar results and also uncovered that, if a leader's style was emotionally supportive, leader–follower interactions with a leader could improve job satisfaction and stress for an extended period while lack of emotional support worsened both states. Madlock (2008) also found that leader communication of emotional support (in addition to other communication behaviors) increased worker satisfaction.

These empirical results fit with our earlier discussion of how empathetic expression should influence follower affect. Providing emotional support should create emotional bonds that support a follower's job satisfaction. In brief, people should feel more satisfied with their jobs when they feel leaders take their emotions into consideration and leaders help followers deal with negative emotions effectively (J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017a, 2017b; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017b).

We can also posit, from evolutionary psychology, that leader displays of emotional support should engender trust in a follower. A leader's display of emotional support should work to develop trust between a leader and follower—if someone cares about your emotions, you will more likely believe that person will also look out for your interests in other areas (Axelrod, 2009; Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009). This increased trust, in turn, should decrease work stress and thus increase job satisfaction (Gilstrap & Collins, 2012; Reisel, Chia, Maloles, & Slocum, 2007).

Hypothesis 1 provides a formal statement of this expectation.

Hypothesis 1: Empathetic leadership has a significant and positive link with follower job satisfaction.

Empathetic Leadership and Follower Innovation

As described in the last section, empathetic leadership should positively influence job satisfaction, and higher job satisfaction provides a needed ingredient for innovation. Specifically, job satisfaction increases everyday innovation (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Dehlin, 2013; M. Mayfield, 2011). Everyday innovation differs from high-level innovation in that high-level innovation occurs as a focus of someone's job and creates strategic level technologies and processes (Amabile, 1988; Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). Everyday innovation occurs as something outside of a person's required work duties and creates minor improvements in routine work tasks (M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2004; Patterson, Kerrin, Gatto-Roissard, & Coan, 2009). Since everyday innovation falls under the category of extra-role behavior, followers' attitudes—how satisfied they are with their job—will enhance everyday innovation. Empirically, a study by Rego, Sousa, Pina e Cunha, Correia, and Saur-Amaral (2007) found that leader empathy significantly increased team creativity. Their work, while at a different analytic level, provides support for the link between empathetic leadership and individual innovation. Similarly, Shipton, West, Parkes, Dawson, and Patterson (2006) found that aggregate job satisfaction positively predicted organizational innovation in manufacturing organizations. All these results align with a broader set of studies that test or propose increased positive affect in workers lead to greater creative efforts, and that leader behavior can increase these affective states (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Devendhiran & Wesley, 2017).

From these studies, we can propose that when followers feel positive workplace affect (job satisfaction), they will engage in more everyday innovations. Job satisfaction indicates positive feelings about workplace activities, and these feelings create both a desire to do more in a job and a feeling of safety about exploring new ways to perform in a job (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Therefore, as job satisfaction increases due to increased empathetic leadership, followers will increase their everyday innovations. Our second hypothesis focuses on the relationship between job satisfaction and innovation. Combined with Hypothesis 1, these statements encapsulate our arguments that empathetic leadership should increase follower everyday innovation as mediated through job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Job satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on innovation.

Based on Hypothesis 2, we expect empathetic leadership to increase everyday innovation behaviors through (or mediated by) job satisfaction. We also expect empathetic leadership to moderate this relationship. We propose the moderating effect because of empathetic language's role in providing support and psychological safety. Trying innovative behavior—especially innovations outside of your normal job role—requires taking risks (M. Mayfield, 2011; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2010). When leaders understand and support taking these risks, people feel more comfortable taking these risks (M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2016a, 2017a; Neck, DiLiello, & Houghton, 2006; Rego et al., 2007). This support should moderate the link between a worker's job satisfaction and her or his innovation. While job satisfaction itself motivates workers to try creative behaviors for better performance, such attempts can create stress that diminishes the achievement of effective innovations. However, leader empathy provides a supportive climate that reduces these stresses (Ahmed, 1998; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). While research on this moderating effect remains sparse (Hammond, Neff, Farr, Schwall, & Zhao, 2011; Hülsheger, Anderson, & Salgado, 2009), workers who receive support about taking these risks should feel both lower stress and greater self-efficacy in their creative attempts (Damanpour, 1991; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017; Wang, Fang, Qureshi, & Janssen, 2015). Hypothesis 3 provides a formal statement of these ideas.

Hypothesis 3: Empathetic leadership positively moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and innovative behavior.

Empathetic Leadership and Follower Performance

We expect empathetic leadership to influence performance through job satisfaction and innovative behavior. Many studies have linked job satisfaction to work performance (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Petty, McGee, & Cavender, 1984), and while questions remain about the relationship's causal direction, much research supports that (at the very least) job satisfaction increases lead to some level of performance increase (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Petty et al., 1984). Therefore, when empathetic leadership increases job satisfaction, this increase should lead to work performance increases as well. Hypothesis 4 captures the expected relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. The combination of Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 4 present the mediating role of job satisfaction between empathetic leadership and job performance.

Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction positively influences follower performance.

Innovation, like job satisfaction, influences performance. Job tasks can never be perfectly described or assigned: such jobs can and usually are automated. Instead, each person needs to tailor a job to her or his abilities and adjust job

tasks to fit specific customer needs and environmental changes (Allred, 2001; Dundon & Pattakos, 2001). This tailoring occurs through everyday innovation (Lafley & Charan, 2010; Patterson et al., 2009). When people engage in more everyday innovation, performance improves because their tasks better fit job needs. Empirical results also support this idea (Bain, Mann, & Pirola-Merlo, 2001; Cross & Cummings, 2004). Hypothesis 5 presents our idea of the link between innovation and performance. The combination of Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 5 present the mediating role of innovation between empathetic leadership and job performance.

Hypothesis 5: Innovation significantly and positively influences performance.

However, innovation is a special kind of workplace activity. Specifically, innovation itself can be improved through innovation. We propose a phenomenon distinct from a feedback loop. Innovative behavior can increase the amount of innovative behavior someone engages in through various feedback mechanisms. Successful innovations will increase self-efficacy for innovation, rewards will also elicit more innovation attempts, and innovation attempts can lead to increased opportunities for more innovation.

We propose a different process that increases the effectiveness of innovative behavior rather than the frequency of innovative behavior. Innovation works to improve the cybernetic link (Duffy, 1984; Wiener, 1965) between understanding how to best use innovation to implement workplace improvements. In essence, people will use their innovative ability to find ways of making their other everyday innovations more effective. For example, someone might start by trying to remember new ideas they have for improving their job, move on to writing these ideas on notecards (and thus retaining more of them), and then use a cell phone audio app to capture more of the ideas. At each stage the person implements a new innovation that makes their innovative behavior better. In short, innovation should act to moderate its own relationship with performance. While this idea is not formally part of the empathetic leadership model, it is included to improve the model's predictive power. Hypothesis 6 presents this proposition. Also, Figure 1 depicts this innovation characteristic through a curved, moderating link between innovation and its link with job performance. The link indicates that as a person's innovative behavior increases we expect that the relationship between innovation and performance will become stronger.

Hypothesis 6: Follower innovation positively moderates its own relationship with performance.

Finally, we make a causality hypothesis. While causality cannot be proven with any one analysis, tests can be made to disprove a given causal relationship. Pearl (Bollen & Pearl, 2013; Pearl, 2009) lays out three tests to support a causal link. The first test looks for a relationship between two constructs. If no relationship exists, then causality does not exist. The second test looks at precedence. For construct A to *cause* changes in construct B, changes in A must occur *before* changes in B. The final, and most difficult, test requires ruling out all other competing explanations.

Almost any statistical test can evaluate the first criteria (linkage): a positive relationship between variables provides sufficient evidence. The second test requires greater effort and always leaves greater uncertainty. Traditional methods include time lagged or longitudinal studies. Such methods, however, require more resources than an initial study often warrants. In addition, any study collecting data at two or more points in time introduces methodological risks that threaten findings' validity. In contrast, methods exist for where error term analysis gives an indication of precedence (Kock, 2015b). This method removes the methodological risk associated with longitudinal studies but introduces uncertainty about possible feedback loops between constructs.

The final causality requirement—eliminating competing explanations—must be met through a combination of strong theory development and multiple, different research designs (Goldthorpe, 2001). As such, we cannot examine the third requirement in this initial study. However, study partially addresses the third concern through testing causal mechanisms between empathetic leadership and performance.

Also, our study addresses the first requirement (linkage) by testing the paths between empathetic leadership and performance, and partially examines the second causality requirement by using cross-sectional tests of directionality between empathetic leadership and performance. Hypothesis 7 gives a formal statement of our expectation.

Hypothesis 7: Changes in empathetic leadership occur before changes in follower performance.

Figure 1 presents a full graphical representation of our hypotheses.

A point about the analytical model needs to be emphasized. We propose that the mediating variables of job satisfaction and innovation fully explain the relationship between empathetic leadership and performance. The model presents a causal statement in line with Pearl (2012, 2014), Bollen and Pearl's (2013), and Goldthorpe's (2001) suggestions for establishing causal linkages between constructs. In brief, the authors propose that in social science research to demonstrate causality one must establish the mechanisms by which an antecedent variable influences a dependent variable. By establishing that these causal mechanisms fully account for a relationship, one builds a strong foundation for causal statements. While other criteria need

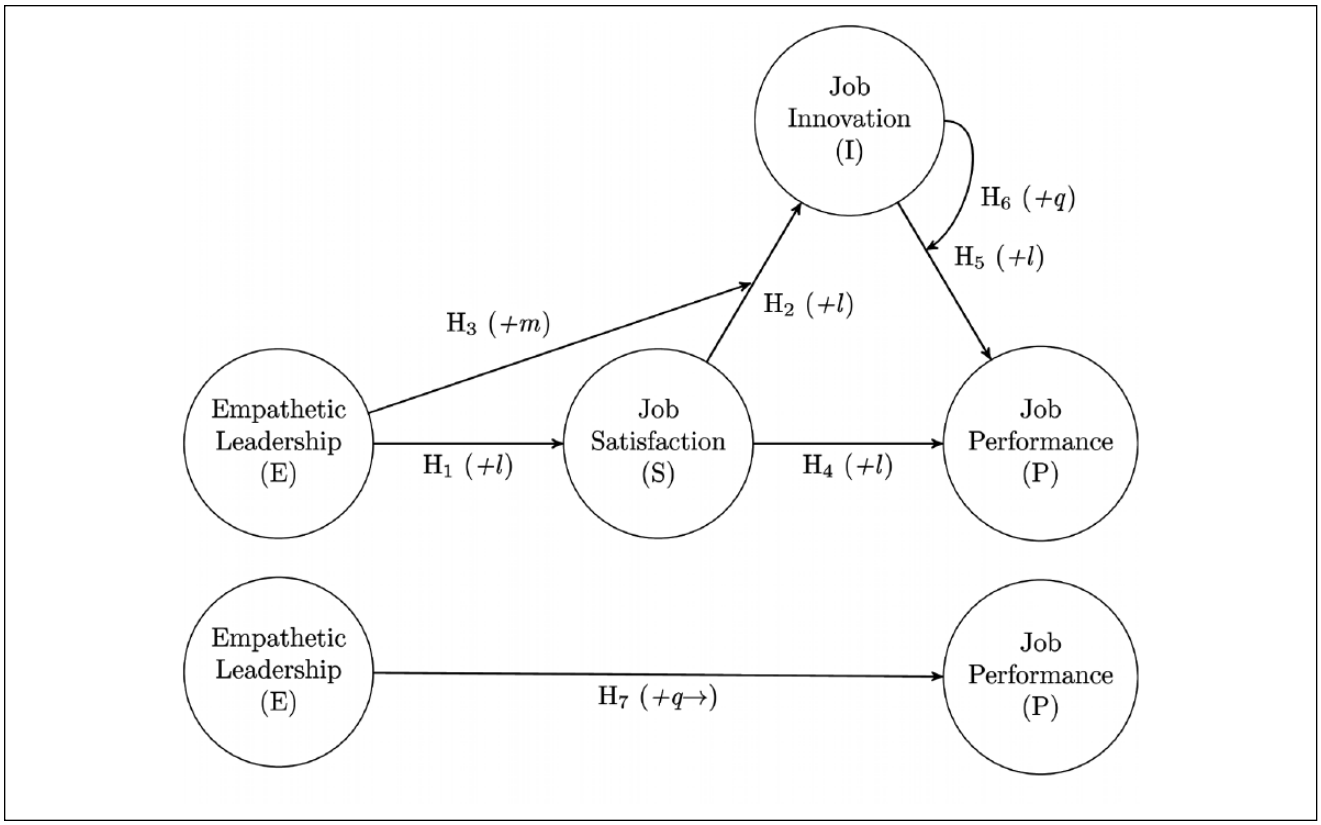

Figure 1. Model and hypotheses.
Note. (+*l*) = positive linear relationship; (+*m*) = positive moderating relationship; (+*q*) = positive quadratic relationship; (+*q*→): positive quadratic relationship with direction of causality going from left to right. The upper graphic represents the detailed relationship between the constructs, and the lower graphic represents the direct relationship between Empathetic Leadership and Job Performance. Each path has a notation linking it to the appropriate hypothesis and the type of expected relationship.

to be established as well (Pearl, 2009), confirming influence mechanisms provides an initial step for testing causal relationships.

Research Methods

To prospectively estimate the minimum sample size required for our empirical study, we conducted two Monte Carlo simulations with normal and severely nonnormal data (Kock, 2016) assuming that the minimum absolute path coefficient in our model would be 0.2. Our simulations suggested minimum sample sizes of 142 and 155, for the widely used statistical power threshold of 0.8 (Cohen, 1988, 1992; Kock, 2016) to be achieved with normal and severely nonnormal data, respectively. The sample size employed in our study far surpassed the highest of these two estimates (i.e., 155), with a useable survey set of 257. (The Scales and Sample section provides more information on the respondents and sample collection methods.)

The question-statements used for data collection are listed in the appendix. We employed structural equation modeling (SEM) through the partial least squares (PLS) method, or PLS-SEM for short, because PLS-SEM builds on techniques that do not assume that the data follow normal distributions (Kock, 2016). As it will be seen later, our data followed nonnormal distributions at both the univariate and multivariate levels.

We employed the software WarpPLS, version 5.0, in our analyses (Kock, 2015b). This software provides an extensive set of outputs, which we used in a comprehensive assessment of our measurement model to ensure that our main results were not an artificial product of psychometrically flawed measurement. Also, this software allows for both moderating and quadratic relationships among latent variables to be modeled directly and easily.

Scales and Sample

We tested all constructs using preexisting, tested, and validated scales. The study examined empathetic leadership through the empathetic part of the motivating language scale (J. Mayfield, Mayfield, & Neck, 2017; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2016b). This scale specifically focuses on how leaders express their emotional support and understanding to

a follower. For this study, the measure had a Cronbach's alpha score of .904. The study used Hoppock's job satisfaction measure (Hoppock, 1935), the Cronbach's alpha score for this measure was .927. The innovation (M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2004) and performance measures (J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2010) had similarly high scores (.917 and .961, respectively). The PLS model provided information on measure factor structure as well as a test of our hypotheses. We will give details later, but all measures met generally accepted guidelines for an appropriate factor structure. Respondents completed the measures assessing their direct boss' empathetic leadership and their own outcome measures.

The sample came from a private motor coach charter company located in the southwest United States. The company has one of the largest market shares, number of vehicles in operations, and number of employees. The main company activities include cross-border transport of people and organizing events and transport for international clientele.

Respondents completed surveys during a single collection period through electronic and hard-copy methods. Office workers received a link to an online survey hosted by Survey Monkey. Other potential respondents had hard-copy versions of the measures distributed in break rooms where the employees held monthly meetings. Such employees received survey instructions (including that the surveys were anonymous and voluntary) and also provided a secure drop box to return completed surveys. The survey had a response rate of 59% (434 surveys distributed, and 257 useable surveys completed). Response method and nonresponse biases were tested using the approach discussed by Abraham, Helms, and Presser (2009), and the results suggested no such biases.

Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 72 years, with a mean age of 46 years and a median age of 47 years. Respondents had a mean overall work experience of 22.1 years (median 19.5 years), and a mean of 8.1 years (median of 5.0 years) of work experience with the company. Most respondents came from operations (67%), with maintenance accounting for the next greatest percentage (13%). The remaining 20% of respondents' areas were management (6%), accounting (5%), sales (5%), and safety (4%). The greatest percentage of respondents had some college (39%), closely followed by having a high school diploma (37%), with 10% having an associate degree, and all other types of educational achievement accounting for less than 10% of the sample. For gender composition, 72% responded as male and 28% responded as female. Income ranges mostly fell between $20,000 and $59,999 (65%) with 21% reporting higher income, 10% lower, and 4% not responding.

Measurement Model Assessment

This section discusses the results of a number of measurement model assessment tests. These tests essentially aim at showing that our measurement model is psychometrically sound (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Being psychometrically sound means, among other psychometrically desirable attributes, that measurement errors were kept at acceptably low levels, that the questionnaire respondents understood question-statements in the same way that other respondents and the designers of the questionnaire did, and that all latent variables measured distinct constructs. The end goal is to ensure that our main results, discussed in the next section, are not an artificial product of a psychometrically flawed measurement model.

Table 1 shows loadings, cross-loadings and weights for the latent variables and their respective indicators. Loadings are shown in shaded cells. These were obtained through a confirmatory factor analysis (Kline, 2015; Kock, 2014; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Also shown are the *p* values associated with loadings and weights. To obtain more conservative measures of loadings, a Kaiser normalization was applied (Ferguson & Takane, 1989; Kaiser, 1958; Kock, 2015b; Ogasawara, 1999).

A measurement model is deemed to have acceptable convergent validity if the *p* values associated with the loadings are equal to or lower than .05, and the loadings are equal to or greater than .5 (Hair, Anderson, Black, & Babin, 2016; Kock, 2014). Based on these criteria, we can say that our measurement model has acceptable convergent validity. Since a PLS-SEM analysis also yields indicator weights, which are proportional to loadings but of lower magnitude, we can augment these convergent validity criteria by also requiring that the P values associated with the weights are equal to or lower than .05 (Kock, 2014, 2015b). This is also met by our measurement model.

Table 2 shows the correlations among latent variables, with the square roots of the average variances extracted (AVEs) along the diagonal in shaded cells. A measurement model is deemed to have acceptable discriminant validity if, for each latent variable, the square root of the AVE is higher than any of the correlations involving that latent variable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Kock, 2014). This is satisfied if the values on the diagonal are higher than any of the values above or below them, in the same column. As we can see, our measurement model presents acceptable discriminant validity.

Table 3 shows various latent variable coefficients. These coefficients allow us to assess reliability, collinearity, common method bias, predictive validity, and normality with respect to our measurement model. Reliability is assessed with the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Collinearity and common method bias are assessed with the full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) coefficients. Predictive validity is assessed with the Q^2 coefficients. Normality is assessed with the Jarque–Bera and robust Jarque–Bera tests, which build on measures of skewness and excess kurtosis.

Table 1. Loadings, Cross-Loadings, and Weights.

	Lds. and cross-lds.						
	E	*p*	*S*	*I*	*P*(Lds.)	Wts.	*P*(Wts.)
E_1	.869	−.074	.041	.009	<.001	.246	<.001
E_2	.879	−.006	−.018	−.043	<.001	.251	<.001
E_3	.889	−.009	−.072	−.003	<.001	.246	<.001
E_4	.850	−.028	.033	.026	<.001	.246	<.001
E_5	.751	.266	.046	.033	<.001	.168	<.001
P_1	.278	.775	−.165	−.049	<.001	.104	.024
P_2	.059	.801	−.154	.090	<.001	.126	.009
P_3	.049	.798	−.097	.065	<.001	.131	.007
P_4	−.025	.813	−.014	−.032	<.001	.133	.006
P_5	−.016	.797	.086	−.058	<.001	.132	.006
P_6	−.036	.799	.029	.015	<.001	.135	.006
P_7	−.009	.800	.028	−.006	<.001	.138	.005
P_8	−.077	.808	.096	−.057	<.001	.135	.006
P_9	−.137	.790	.135	.030	<.001	.129	.007
S_1	.061	.087	.798	−.143	<.001	.233	<.001
S_2	−.061	−.044	.841	−.089	<.001	.239	<.001
S_3	.036	−.030	.806	−.034	<.001	.242	<.001
S_4	−.073	.043	.767	.133	<.001	.241	<.001
S_5	.053	−.057	.756	.164	<.001	.225	<.001
I_1	−.037	−.076	.091	.810	<.001	.234	<.001
I_2	.008	−.135	−.046	.851	<.001	.234	<.001
I_3	.030	.060	−.050	.804	<.001	.253	<.001
I_4	.045	.042	.008	.793	<.001	.244	<.001
I_5	−.054	.126	.009	.789	<.001	.237	<.001

Note. Loadings are shown in shaded cells. Latent variables: empathetic leadership (*E*), job satisfaction (*S*), job innovativeness (*I*), and job performance (*P*); Lds. and cross-lds. = loadings and cross-loadings; loadings in shaded cells; Kaiser normalization applied to loadings; Wts. = weights; *P*() = *p* values, for loadings or weights.

Table 2. Latent Variable Correlations and Square Roots of AVEs.

	E	*P*	*S*	*I*
Empathetic leadership (*E*)	.856	.231	.480	.237
Job performance (*P*)	.231	.857	.416	.566
Job satisfaction (*S*)	.480	.416	.847	.366
Job innovativeness (*I*)	.237	.566	.366	.830

Note. AVEs = average variances extracted. Square roots of AVEs on diagonal, in shaded cells; off-diagonal cells show latent variable correlations.

If both the compositive reliability and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients are all equal to or greater than .7, a measurement model is deemed to have acceptable reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Kock, 2014; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). If all full collinearity VIF coefficients are equal to or lower than 3.3, a measurement model is deemed to be free from both vertical and lateral collinearity, as well as from common method bias (Kock, 2015a; Kock & Lynn, 2012). As can be seen, our measurement model meets all these criteria.

Table 3. Latent Variable Coefficients.

Measure	*E*	*P*	*S*	*I*
Composite reliability	.931	.961	.927	.917
Cronbach's alpha	.904	.954	.902	.887
Full collinearity VIF	1.308	1.621	1.623	1.545
Q^2		.404	.230	.175
Skewness	−.189	.134	−.521	.016
Excess kurtosis	.025	−1.104	−.591	−.287
Normal: Jarque–Bera test	Yes	No	No	Yes
Normal: Robust Jarque–Bera test	Yes	No	No	Yes

Note. Latent variables: empathetic leadership (*E*), job satisfaction (*S*), job innovativeness (*I*), and job performance (*P*); VIF = variance inflation factor; last two rows show results from two complementary normality tests.

Specifically regarding common method bias, Kock (2015a) demonstrated that the full collinearity VIF coefficients are particularly sensitive to pathological common variation across latent variables in methodological contexts similar to the one found in our study. That is, the sensitivity enables identification of common method bias in a model that nevertheless passes standard convergent and discriminant validity assessment criteria based on a confirmatory factor analysis, as in our study. The threshold of 3.3 recommended by Kock (2015a) and Kock and Lynn (2012) for full collinearity VIF coefficients is the most conservative, and the one used in our assessment.

Q^2 coefficients are also known as Stone-Geisser Q^2 coefficients, after their main original proponents (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974), and are used for predictive validity assessment (Kock, 2015b). They are available only for endogenous latent variables; that is, latent variables that have arrows pointing at them. A measurement model is deemed to have acceptable predictive validity if no Q^2 coefficient is lower than zero (Kock, 2015a, 2015b). Our measurement model meets this criterion.

Finally, two tests of normality that use skewness and excess kurtosis values suggest that our data is multivariate nonnormal. More specifically, the latent variables job satisfaction (*S*) and job performance (*P*) were found to be nonnormally distributed. The tests employed were the classic Jarque-Bera test (Bera & Jarque, 1981; Jarque & Bera, 1980) and Gel and Gastwirth's (2008) robust modification of the test. Both tests were used in combination, allowing for a conservative assessment of nonnormality (Kock, 2015b).

Additionally, we conducted the same normality tests with all our indicators. Most of the indicators were found to be nonnormally distributed. These tests, together with the

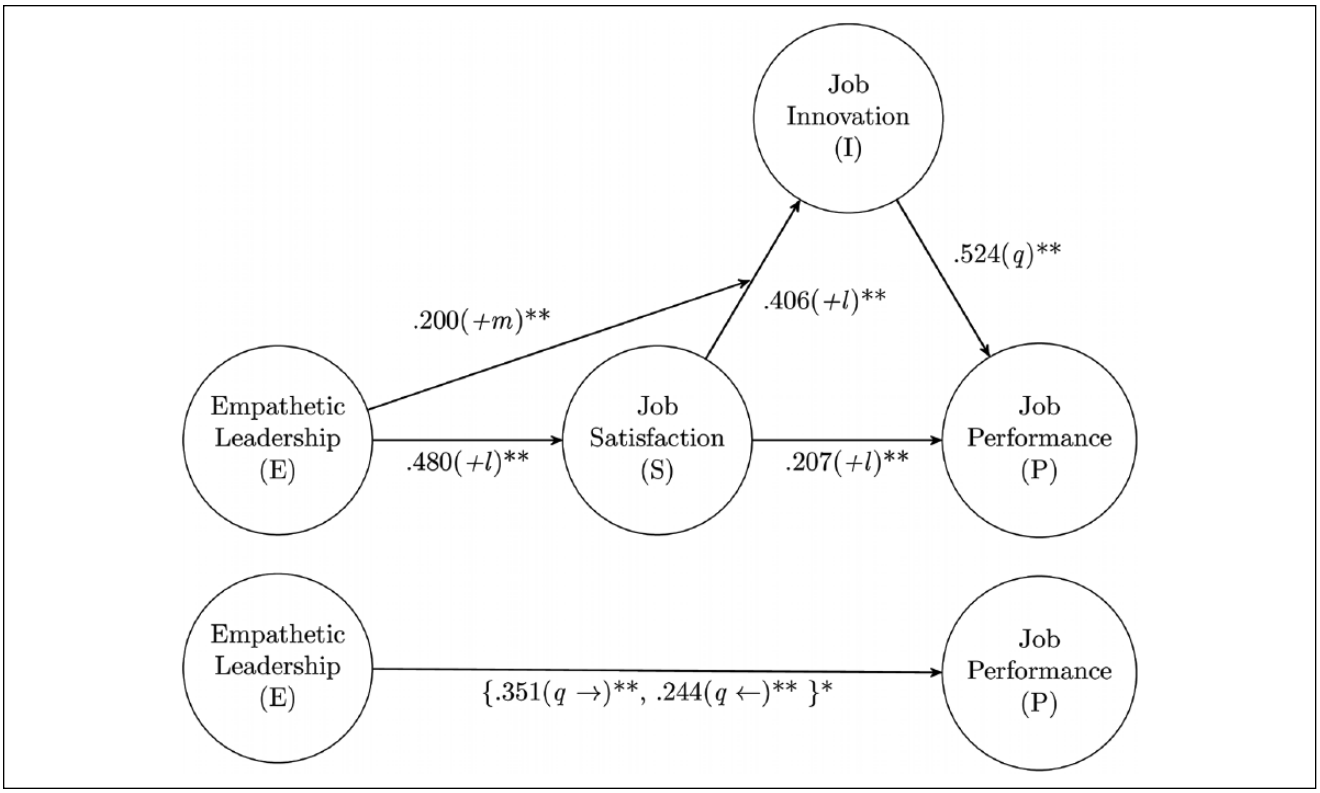

Figure 2. Analysis results.
Note. I, m, and q indicate how the associations were modeled (linear, moderating, and quadratic, respectively); for the model at the bottom, the significance level indicates outside {} refers to the difference between path coefficients going from M to P (→) and from P to M (←).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .001$.

normality tests applied to the latent variables, suggest that our use of PLS-SEM was justified (Kock, 2016). As noted before, PLS-SEM builds on techniques that do not assume that the data follows normal distributions, at the univariate or multivariate levels.

Results

Model results showed support for our hypotheses. Leader empathetic leadership had a significant (direct) relationship with job satisfaction. The path coefficient between empathetic leadership and job satisfaction was 0.480. In turn, follower job satisfaction significantly influenced performance (path coefficient of 0.207), and innovation (path coefficient of 0.406). In addition, leader empathetic leadership positively moderated the relationship between job satisfaction and innovation. Finally, innovation was significantly related to performance with a path coefficient of 0.525, and also acted as a self-moderator with performance. Figure 2 presents these relationships graphically, and Table 4 provides a summary of hypothesis results.

Table 4. Support for the Hypotheses Based on the Results.

Hypothesis	Supported?
Hypothesis 1: Empathetic leadership has a significant and positive link with follower job satisfaction.	Yes
Hypothesis 2: Job satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on innovation.	Yes
Hypothesis 3: Empathetic leadership positively moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and innovative behavior.	Yes
Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction positively influences follower performance.	Yes
Hypothesis 5: Innovation significantly and positively influences performance.	Yes
Hypothesis 6: Follower innovation positively moderates its own relationship with performance.	Yes
Hypothesis 7: Changes in empathetic leadership occur before changes in follower performance.	Yes

It is difficult to establish causality with observational studies (Pearl, 2009). Causal models do however let us create and examine propositions for indications of causal processes (Kock, 2015b, 2016; Pearl, 1998, 2012). For example, you can use using error terms to estimate the probability of the direction of relationships between two variables. In the method, you examine the path coefficients between two

variables when the direction of the path is reversed and see which direction has greater probability. For our study, we first examined a relationship with the influence going from empathetic leadership to job performance, and then examined the relationship with the influence going from job performance to empathetic leadership. The differences between these two directions was significant with the most likely direction being from empathetic leadership to follower performance (see Figure 2 for analysis details). The test provides evidence that changes in empathetic leadership precede changes in performance (Kock, 2015b; Pearl, 2009). The analysis cannot preclude an omitted third variable being the actual cause of the relationship or substitute for longitudinal analysis, but the findings do provide partial causal evidence and are encouraging for future, more targeted causal studies.

Conclusion and Discussion

This article presented the development and test of empathetic leadership theory. Our theory provides a specific model to examine how leader support and understanding for followers influences workplace outcomes. The model explicated a causal mechanism for how leader empathy increases follower performance by increasing job satisfaction and innovation. These results provide evidence for empathetic leadership's validity as a leadership model (Goldthorpe, 2001).

The PLS model analysis supported all proposed hypotheses with the exogenous constructs explaining a substantial amount of variance in all endogenous constructs (Cohen, 1988). The path linkages also provide model validity evidence: linkages for known variable relationships (i.e., job satisfaction to performance, and innovation to performance) fall within the range of previous findings (Judge et al., 2002; J. Mayfield, Mayfield, & Kopf, 1998; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2004; Petty et al., 1984). Also, while empathetic leadership is a new theory, its measurement was based on an existing scale (Luca & Gray, 2004; J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2009; J. Mayfield, Mayfield, & Kopf, 1995), and the link between this scale and job satisfaction and its (indirect) link with performance also matches previous findings (J. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2006; J. Mayfield et al., 1998; M. Mayfield & Mayfield, 2004). These results support the overall reasonableness and validity of the tested model (Dubin, 1978; Lynham, 2002; Miner, 2005).

Based on these results, the empathetic leadership model appears sound and increases our understanding of the leadership process. The model is important for two reasons. First, it places leader support for follower psychological and safety needs at the forefront. Such understanding helps us better acknowledge the emotional needs of employees. Second, it gives us a better understanding of how leader behavior increases follower everyday innovation: an activity with increasing relevance in the workplace that remains relatively unexamined.

Additionally, this study investigated a curious aspect of the link between innovation and performance. In this relationship, innovation moderates its own relationship with performance. This effect indicates that innovative behavior improves innovation effectiveness. This finding demonstrates that, over time, people use their innovative endeavors to make their innovations more efficient. Such efficiencies can come about by being able to better target what innovations they undertake through cybernetic processes or use innovations to develop better tools to leverage their performance related innovations. While not directly part of the empathetic leadership theory, this finding should be developed and pursued in future research.

Future investigations of empathetic leadership should expand the model's foundations and examine a wider array of workplace outcomes. Our preliminary examination shows strong evidence for the link between empathetic leadership and performance as well as providing evidence of the model's causality (Goldthorpe, 2001; Pearl, 2012, 2014). However, there are other important workplace outcomes such as turnover, absenteeism, and organizational citizenship behavior that need exploration.

Also, empathetic leadership needs to be studied in different settings—especially in terms of empathetic leadership's influence on everyday innovation. While the sample for this setting—employees with various job types in a bus company—included respondents with diverse work demands, the work needs replication in different settings. It would be useful to examine how empathetic leadership works in jobs where people have greater and more limited chances to employ everyday innovation. Also, useful would be studies of mediated leader and follower interactions rather than face-to-face. Such studies can help us understand the role of communication channels on the expression of empathy (Kock, 2005, 2008).

To support such studies, we need greater development of empathetic leadership's theoretical base (Dubin, 1978; Goldthorpe, 2001; Pearl, 2009). This article provides a beginning for this development, but it focused on a very applied theory approach: the link between empathetic leadership and performance. Future work needs to examine how empathetic leadership influences other workplace outcomes, what role cultural settings play, how leader behavior develops over time, and what leads to lesser or greater expressions of leader empathy.

Future studies can also incorporate experimental manipulations to check the causality indications from this study. The cultural setting—both national and organizational—also limits the study's generalizability due to its single setting sample. Additionally, while using an existing leader empathy measure aided model testing by providing a thoroughly developed scale, future researchers should create a measure specifically targeted to capture the full spectrum of leader empathetic leadership.

These results also have practical implications. The findings show that leader empathy has a significant effect on follower performance. As such, our work underscores the importance of emotional care for employees. More concretely, for every one standard deviation increase in empathetic leadership, you can expect an approximate 0.20 standard deviation increase in performance. In percentage terms, for every 10% increase in empathetic leadership you can roughly expect a 2% increase in performance (Rosenthal, Rosnow, & Rubin, 2000; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1982). Based on current U.S. worker productivity, a 10% increase in empathetic leadership would lead to an approximate $1,000.00 annual performance increase per person (Cascio, 2000; Cascio & Boudreau, 2011).

Appendix

Questionnaire

The question-statements below were used to obtain data for each of the latent variable indicators. Question-statements for empathetic leadership (*M*) were answered on 7-point Likert-type scales. All other question-statements were answered on 5-point Likert-type scales.

Empathetic Leadership (E)

- M_1: My supervisor gives me praise for my good work.
- M_2: My supervisor shows me encouragement for my work efforts.
- M_3: My supervisor shows concern about my job satisfaction.
- M_4: My supervisor expresses his/her support for my professional development.
- M_5: My supervisor shows trust in me.

Job Satisfaction (S)

- s_1: I always feel satisfied with my job.
- s_2: I like my job.
- s_3: I do not want to change my job.
- s_4: I like my job more than others.
- s_5: I like telling people about my job.

Job Innovativeness (I)

- I_1: I try new ideas and approaches to problems.
- I_2: I welcome uncertainty and unusual circumstances related to my tasks.
- I_3: I can be counted on to find a new use for existing methods or equipment.
- I_4: I demonstrate originality.
- I_5: I provide critical input toward a new solution.

Job Performance (P)

- P_1: Which of the following selections best describes how your supervisor rated you on your last formal performance evaluation?
- P_2: How does your level of production quantity compare with that of your colleagues' productivity levels?
- P_3: How does the quality of your products or services compare with your colleagues' output?
- P_4: How efficiently do you work compared with your colleagues? In other words, how well do you use available resources (money, people, equipment, etc.)?
- P_5: Compared with your colleagues, how good are you at preventing or minimizing potential work problems before they occur?
- P_6: Compared with your colleagues, how effective are you with keeping up with changes that could affect the way you work?
- P_7: How quickly do you adjust to work changes compared with your colleagues?
- P_8: How well would you rate yourself compared with your colleagues in adjusting to new work changes?
- P_9: How well do you handle work place emergencies (such as crisis deadlines, unexpected personnel issues, resources allocation problems, etc.) compared with your colleagues?

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