



**The Importance Of Empathetic Leadership For High Performance
Industry and Sacred Work Place**

Narender Chinthamu

MIT (Massachusetts Institute Of Technology) CTO Candidate, Enterprise
Architect, Dallas, Texas, USA

Corresponding Author- Narender Chinthamu

Email: narender.chinthamu@gmail.com

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Abstract:

Empathetic leadership is the ability of the leader to understand the members' needs, thoughts and feelings. The significance of empathetic leadership is that it drives the leaders to understand the employees' feelings and analyzing the root cause of their lack of performance. Empathetic leadership also enables high quality leader and member relationship in the work place thus building high performance organization.

Purpose: This study intends to discuss the significance aspects and ideas of empathetic leadership and its related concepts. The study also highlights the substantial positive impact of empathetic leadership on various organizational contexts and outcomes. **Originality:** The Originality/Novelty of the paper is that it is designed with the delivery of content that conceptualize the linkage between empathetic leadership and high-performance organization as well as empathetic leadership and Sacred work place. **Methodology:** The research reviews the existing literatures, scholarly articles and models for reference. **Findings:** Thus, the paper specifically concludes the holistic approach of implementing empathetic leadership in the work place to achieve high performance at work. The study suggests that the management should embrace empathetic leadership and to motivate the leaders to exhibit empathy in order to drive innovation, inclusion and engagement among the workforce thus focusing on their workplace identity and priority with the aim to achieve significant business outcomes.

Keywords: Empathetic leadership, Empathy, Strategic leadership, Innovation, Emotional intelligence, Leadership trait.

Introduction:

(Salovey and Mayer, 1990 p.194)

defines Empathy as “the ability to comprehend another’s feelings and to re-experience them oneself”. Empathy is the ability to understand, relate and recognize the concern, feeling, motive and situation of other people. In other words, Empathy is the ability to respond to the feelings, emotions and behaviors of another person. It is a facet of emotional intelligence that can enable communication, as well as the development and maintenance of successful work relationships. Empathy is a key component of many leadership styles, because it allows the leaders to create bonds with others and influence them positively. According to Daniel Goleman and Paul Ekman, well-known psychologists, Empathy can be classified into three types namely: “Cognitive empathy, emotional empathy and compassionate empathy”. Cognitive empathy relates to the “Theory of mind”, which is the ability to think like others and predict future behaviours and also understanding how the situation

influence the people’s thoughts. Emotional empathy is exhibiting a physical response towards others feelings and experiences. Compassionate empathy is a condition that entails learning and interpreting how to react to another person's feelings.

Empathetic leaders:

Empathetic leaders take initiative in learning their followers’ emotion, intention, experiences and actions. They demonstrate good communication and active listening abilities with the purpose of encouraging team members to improve their own communication skills in order to foster more empathy at work. An empathic leader is really concerned in his or her followers’ life, problems, and feelings. They communicate with their teammates in such a way that they feel valued and respected for their personal and professional merits. Empathetic leaders focus on recognizing, anticipating, and comprehending the team members' emotional needs. They play an active role in promoting employee unity

and cultural competency in the diversified work place.

Empathetic leadership –

Theoretical background:

Empathetic leadership is a strategy imperative. It is the ability to lead the followers and understanding their interests as well as their ideas and feelings. Empathetic leadership helps in creating a conducive and effective work environment for the workers. (Kock *etal.*, 2019), specifies that being empathic towards the followers is worthwhile and will result in developing emotional and psychological between the leaders and followers. He also insists that by exhibiting empathetic leadership, the leader will develop the ability to understand the personal interest and welfare concerns of each and every individual thus considering them as an inevitable organizational asset. In the words of (Lam, 2017), leaders who exhibit empathy in the work place is said to display “Love in action” and are highly conscious in addressing and satisfying the needs, wants and desires of their subordinates. (Johnson, 2008), states that the empathic

nature of the leaders has a positive impact on employees’ behaviour and also it increases the workers’ level of confidence in handling issues in the work place. (Mahsud, Yukl and Prussia, 2010), identified that there is positive relationship between empathy and task-relationship leadership which also positively impacts the quality of relationship between the leader and members. (Deliu, 2019), mentions that being empathetic will help the leaders to setoff themselves as a visionary leader in no time. (Haynie *etal.*, 2019), states that under empathetic leadership, employees feel comfortable and secure to disclose the complaints and make suggestions to the leaders. (Stein and Book, 2000), have discussed that empathetic leaders are highly considerate in managing workforce diversity and also motivate the employees towards engagement in the work as well as in accomplishing personal and organizational goals. The leaders who exerts empathy in diverse managerial practices in the organization are tend to exercise empathetic listening towards the

voice of the subordinates thus eliminating conflicts that hinders organizational growth and learning, says (Nadiia *etal.*, 2019). In the findings of (Batson *etal.*, 1996), Women are more considerate towards others feelings and exhibit high level of empathy when compared to men. In the opinion of (Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002), employees in the workplace observe the emotional status of their leaders and tend to reflect with the same state of emotion (as of their leaders). (William, 2001), highlights that empathetic leaders are transformational leaders whose primary focus is to express care, concern and compassion towards their followers thus striving for their welfare and well-being in the workplace. (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997) states that the employees like the type of leaders who are empathic in nature and who care for their followers which in turn affirms the employees to develop an affectionate bond towards their leaders in the workplace. (Hassan *etal.*, 2001), opines that emotionally competence leaders are of in great demand in

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today's scenario to face the changing needs of global business environment in the way of gaining competitive edge for sustainability. (Regina Baridoo Ekiyor, 2019) reviews that empathetic leadership plays a substantial role in enhancing workers resilience in the work place by displaying the qualities of "Optimism, humour and equanimity". (House and Podsakoff, 1994) examined that an effective leader are those who have high concern and attention to their followers needs and are capable of being empathetic in the workplace. (Delia Deliu, 2019), discusses that empathy is a key variable of effective leadership. And the study also states that empathetic leaders are valuable assets for the organization and are responsible for building and nurturing cordial and congenial relationship in the work place.

Objective of the Study:

- This paper aims to study the concept of empathetic leadership and its impelling role and need in today's scenario.
- In this context, the study also captures various outcomes of

practicing effective empathetic leadership in the work place.

- The Research signifies the substantial contribution of empathetic leadership in delivering high-performance in the organization and creating a sacred work place.

Methodology of the Study:

The Study is conceptual in nature and various literary contributions, theories, and concepts were examined and analyzed for the study's purposes. For the conceptualization of this work, books, journal publications, articles and websites were used for reference.

Need for Empathetic leadership in the work place:

Empathetic leadership is a need of the hour. The organizations and the people are expecting the leaders to display empathic skills to meet the needs and settle the issues of the workforce with the intention of creating the atmosphere of vibrant workplace. Empathetic leadership is essential in the work place for the following reasons:

- Empathetic leaders will easily understand the feelings of the

employees and are aware of their needs in the work place.

- Empathy in the workplace facilitates open communication and constructive feedback in practice.
- Empathetic leaders take the responsibility of solving employees' issues and motivate them towards goal accomplishment.
- Empathetic leaders are also in charge of reducing organizational cynicism among the employees and fosters organizational citizenship behaviour by creating optimistic environment in the work place.
- Empathetic leadership initiates proactive approach towards managing diversity in the workplace to move forward on developing strategic modalities.
- Empathetic leadership influence followers' values, behaviours and beliefs to realize long term organizational goals to embrace organization success.
- Empathetic leadership enables high quality leader and member relationship in the work place thus building high performance work teams.

Significance of Empathetic leadership in the workplace:

Empathetic leadership in the workplace fosters tangible and intangible benefits in the organization. Expressing sense of empathy in the organization will prevent conflicts and enhances interpersonal relationship among the workers. Adding to this, empathetic leadership facilitates effectiveness in diverse managerial functions like employee engagement, creativity and innovation, managing diversification and inclusion, enhancing organizational health and building high performance work teams as mentioned in figure 1.

1 Employee engagement:

Employee engagement is the involvement and commitment of the employees in the workplace. Employee engagement is the key determining factor to operational efficiency and organizational success. High levels of employee engagement in the organization leads to high productivity, profitability, low employee absenteeism and attrition, high customer and employee satisfaction, employee happiness and

positivity in the work place. The overall performance of the organization is positively related with the employee engagement. High levels of engagement among the employees can be fostered through empathetic leadership. **(Mark Slaski, 2003)** stated that the emotionally intelligent leaders have the ability to lead their team members with high involvement and sense of unity in the work place thus by exhibiting empathy towards their members' needs. It should be noted that empathetic leaders identify the negative emotions of their members and motivate them to cultivate positive emotions and involvement in the workplace.

Creativity and innovation:

Empathetic leaders sense the emotion of their followers and motivate them to come with up with good ideas without any hesitation. Fear of acceptance and fear of criticism were the main reason that blocks the employees to brainstorm their ideas. This results in lack of creativity and innovation in the workplace. Such scenario can be surmounted by an empathetic leader

who can constantly encourage their employees to brainstorm and to champion their ideas. Empathetic leadership thus creates an open environment for the employees to freely share their thoughts and make them to feel connected and accepted.

Diversification and Inclusion:

Empathetic leaders are the protagonists in addressing the diversification and inclusivity issues in the work place. It is indeed a challenging task for the organization to manage workplace diversity and to develop inclusive work environment. In that sense, the management relies on the leaders to display Diversification and Inclusion (D&I) competency to embrace organization development and success. Empathetic leaders demonstrates D&I competencies and humility in all the process and functions of the organization thus promoting value creation and unbiased workplace.

Organizational health:

Organizational health refers to the well-being of the organization which is identified in terms of organizational performance in

delivering value and accomplishing goals. It is a way of ascertaining the organization's process improvement without any compromise on organization's long-term goals and objectives. Empathetic leadership is the foundation for a healthy organization. Empathetic leaders take the responsibility of building trust, mastering conflicts and focus on results to create a cohesive work environment.

High performance organization:

The business landscape in today's scenario is more demanding, more global and more competitive. Only some organizations could sustain in this competitive market and those organizations are termed as high-performance organizations. The organization could deliver high performance by framing effective strategies, lean organizational design, robust management and most significantly by implementing empathetic leadership in the work place. Empathetic leadership develops high potential employees and prepares them to meet new challenges and opportunities to yield

superior results, thus resulting in high performance organization.

Empathetic leadership and Virtual team:

Virtual team lacks in direct supervision from their leaders. As the remote teams are dispersed and are away from the traditional work setting, the leaders does not have direct control with their team members and also it is an added responsibility for the leaders to display empathy in dealing with the remote employees, as the remote workers would feel isolated and frustrated while working remotely. It should be pointed out that lack of empathy in the organization results in negative outcomes like lack of co-operation, lack of integrity, collapse in team dynamics, employee disconnect, poor work life balance, burnout, turnover, loss of productivity and psychological problems. To settle out these negative outcomes in a remote working setup, the leaders should showcase the quality of being empathetic in the workplace so that

they could ensure effective management of remote team and keep them aligned and more productive.

Empathetic leadership and sacred work place:

Sacred work place is a highly energetic and vibrant work environment with full of positive vibes and dedicated zone of values, passion, creativity, mindfulness, optimism and workers active participation. In other words, Sacred work place is an environment which comprises of devoted employees who are loyal and contributes to the organization's values and beliefs. Therefore, empathetic leaders play an influential role in creating a sacred workplace by exhibiting empathy and compassion. Thus, empathetic leaders inspire their followers to spread positivity in the work place and to reduce organization cynicism. Empathetic leaders hold the power of energizing and nurturing the work place with zeal and zest and making it more blissful and divineful

Conceptual framework:

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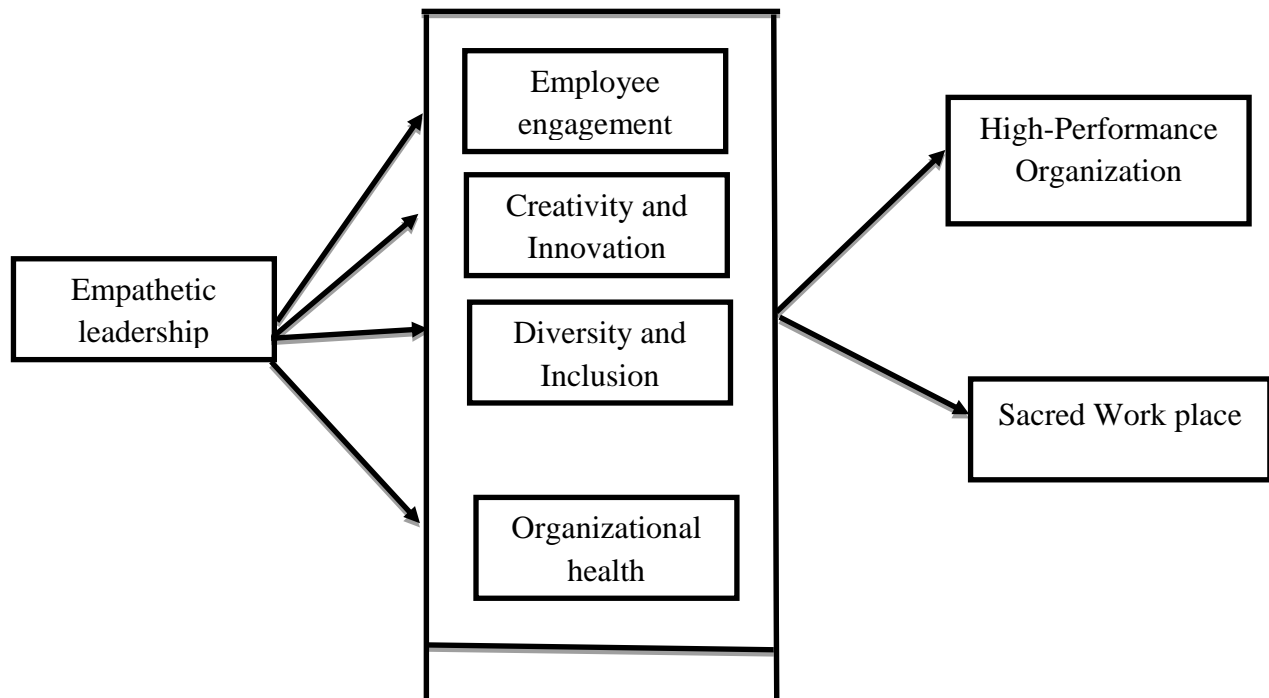


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of Empathetic leadership with its outcomes in the work place.

Source: The authors

Pros and cons of Empathetic leadership:

1 Pros:

- Empathetic leaders understand the behaviour and the emotional needs of the employees.
- Empathetic leaders have a genuine interest in the growth of the employees.
- Empathetic leaders strive in resolving conflicts among the employees and encourages them to maintain successful relationship in the work place.
- Empathetic leaders are active agent in fostering positivity and happiness in the work place.

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- Empathetic leadership influences the followers towards shared vision and values of the organization.
- Empathy driven leadership eliminates disparities in the work environment and masters the competency of honoring diversity and inclusion in the work place.
- Empathetic leadership nurtures the work place and enhances organizational wellness.

2.Cons:

- Being overly caring and kind sometimes can be a drawback where

the employees take advantage of the empathetical trait.

- Being empathetic should be a two-way process. It is not only the responsibility of the leader to withhold empathetical trait but the employees should also have the concern for their leaders and should manifest the empathy for right purpose.
- Empathy in some situation is a weak trait, where the employees falsely create sympathy to gain attention from their leaders.
- Leaders being more empathetic can be a way of more pampering their team members, which results in lack of effort and risk taking among the employees.
- Empathetic can be more stressful, since we care for others more and are more sensitive to other feelings which may be a added burden of carrying out others emotions into our shoes.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Empathy is a core competency of an effective leadership. Empathy when used by the leaders appropriately at right level will lead to organizational success. Empathetic leadership

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connects the members of the organization and create a sense of attachment among them. This type of leadership prioritizes on yielding overall organizational wellness through positivity and active engagement in the work place. Empathy is a soft construct and it is hard to operationalize. Once empathy is practiced mutually by the leader and the members, it gears up powerful outcomes and desirable quality in the workplace leading to high performance organizations. Adding to this, Empathetic leaders must know when to assert themselves. If someone is constantly taking advantage of being empathetic and never reciprocating, it's important to take a step back and assess the situation, as well as the limits and rights that have been crossed. Empathetic leaders must draw a border line and maintain a right balance in being empathetic towards their employees.

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