EXAMINING EMPATHY IN TEAM LEADER PRACTICES: A QUALITATIVE

CASE STUDY

by

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Abstract

In many organizational settings, companies use the team concept in order to accomplish organizational goals in a timely and efficient manner. In manufacturing settings, organizations use the team concept to complete tasks such as building products in bulk quantities, as well as provide safety to employees. In this type of setting, every team has a team leader who is responsible for providing support to the team members (coworkers) and ensuring that the team accomplishes organizational goals. In many organizations, there is a disparity in teams. Some teams are successful in completing organizational goals and have high team morale, while other teams struggle in meeting goals and have low team morale. Many possible factors play in to explaining why there are disparities in teams. One possible explanation for disparity in teams is empathy. The research study conducted was an exploratory qualitative case study involving interviews with 14 team leaders of an automotive factory in the United States. The purpose of the case study was to examine the role of empathy used by team leaders with their coworkers. The results from the data collection found the following themes: reciprocation, offering supportive behaviors, better work culture, relationship building, increased team morale, increased involvement in running the business, recognition, determining factors for deciding to use empathy, and connection with coworkers.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my beloved Chelsea, who supported me through the entire process, my loving Mother, Joni, who always believed in me, and most of all, my true mentor and Father, Rick, who helped guide me along this path before I ever even realized it. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

This research study investigated how team leaders of organizational work teams of hourly employees used empathy. In many organizational settings, organizations use the format of teams to accomplish organizational goals. In this study, teams consisted of employees (hourly coworkers) with selected employees as the team leaders. Some organizations may use the team leader position as a form of promotion, whereas other organizations may have each team vote on the position of team leader. When team members believe they are receiving support from the organization and leaders, it has a positive impact on outcomes like performance and goal achievement (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). When team members do not believe they are receiving an adequate amount of support from leaders, it can potentially decrease performance, morale, and achievements (Bashur, Hernandez, & Gonzalez-Roma, 2011). Support from leaders can come in different forms, such as empathy. Empathy has been defined as "when one person vicariously experiences the feelings, perceptions, and thoughts of another" (Pedersen & Pope, 2010, p. 841). This definition captures empathy as an experience from the perspective of the person; however, empathy has also been defined in terms of an actual behavior. Gerdes, Lietz, and Segal (2011) explained that the behaviors demonstrated by a person due to reaction from experiencing empathy in a situation, are directly related to empathy itself. As an example, if a manager in an organization can relate to an employee's difficulty and as a result behaves in a supportive manner, such as helping with a challenging task, that supportive behavior would be considered demonstrating

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empathy. This study focused on the behavioral definition of empathy by investigating how team leaders demonstrated empathy with their coworkers.

Previous research conducted by Katzell and Thompson (1990) has shown that people desire to have work environments that are supportive in a social manner, thus creating an environment where organizational leaders make decisions that are in the best interest of the employees. Social support refers to organizational leaders making decisions that are in the best interests of the employees, and in turn, creating a work culture where employees help coworkers in completing organizational tasks (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). While supportive work environments are important to employees of organizations, many organizations do not achieve creating this type of work environment (Katzell & Thompson, 1990). A study conducted by Byrne and Hochwarter (2006) showed that when employees believed that they were receiving organizational support, performance levels were high. When employees believed that they were not receiving organizational support, performance levels decreased (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2006). Organizations that are supportive in a social manner are considered to be caring organizations (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). This refers to the organization caring about the employees, willing to support them as people, using empathy as a tool to help build a successful organization. Empathy is considered one of four dimensions of social support (Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, & Whitten, 2010). The other three dimensions: positive, negative, and non-job related social support, have been the focus of research for years, while empathy is becoming increasingly more popular empirically (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994). The present research study added scientific knowledge to the previous research by exploring exactly how team leaders in leading organized work teams use empathy.

Previous research in this field has shown that the people within an organization appreciate support in a social manner (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). The next step in this area of research is investigating how the leaders of teams give support to coworkers, starting with how they use empathy. Previous research has shown that team leaders of organizations use empathy in leading organizational work teams. A study conducted by Sauer (2011) examined the style of leadership used by team leaders, and how the team members perceived those same team leaders. The results showed that team members had different perceptions of team leaders based upon the style of leadership used by team leaders (Sauer, 2011). Team leaders using leadership styles that involved the use of empathy were perceived more positively by team members than team leaders using styles of leadership that did not include empathy (Sauer, 2011).

Another study conducted by Gregory and Levy (2011) investigated the relationships between supervisors and employees and how the employees perceived the relationships. The results indicated that employees perceived relationships to be more positive with supervisors who demonstrated empathy versus supervisors who did not (Gregory & Levy, 2011). This showed the value in using a leadership style that involved the use of empathy. Passmore (2007) elaborated that leaders need to focus on the emotions of others when trying to build a working relationship (Passmore, 2007). Hunt and Weintraub (2002) explained that empathy is a key factor in effective leaders working with employees (Hunt & Weintraub, 2002). One aspect of the research study that changes the dynamic is that in many organizations, the team leaders are leaders with authority and power in comparison to the team members that they lead. The research study focused on how team leaders used empathy in leading teams of coworkers within

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an organizational setting. The term *coworkers,* refers to team members who are at the same hierarchical level as the team leaders. The relationship between peer leaders and coworkers is different compared to the relationship between coworkers and leaders with authority. Focusing on team leaders and how they use empathy in leading their teams of coworkers will focus on a different dynamic compared to previous research.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that many team leaders use empathy in leading organizational work teams; however, it is unclear how team leaders use empathy in leading organizational work teams (Drach-Zahavy, 2004). Leadership is about influencing individuals to contribute to team goals (Kaiser, McGinnis, & Overfield, 2012). The psychological view of leadership is a social influence process that involves leaders using interpersonal behaviors to motivate team members, whereas organizations typically view leadership as more of a strategy or work system (Kaiser, McGinnis, & Overfield, 2012). Many organizations have a disparity in teams based upon performance and team morale. In organizations where productivity is a critical factor, many employees have negative feelings toward their immediate leader (Schmid & Darioly, 2014). While some teams are successful, other teams are under performing and not meeting organizational goals such as productivity numbers. Effective leaders of teams may be using empathy in leading successful teams of coworkers as a key part of their leadership. Ineffective teams of coworkers may need their team leaders to use empathy in order to help the teams become successful in performance.

A study conducted by Moss, Ritossa, and Ngu (2006) investigated leadership behavior and the role of emotional intelligence within a particular organizational setting.

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The study involved leaders and employees taking a survey inquiring about the style of leadership that leaders used with employees. The results showed that many of the leaders believed that they were using transformational leadership, including emotional intelligence, as one of the strong characteristics in their leadership. Employees of the leaders, however, indicated they believed the leaders were not effective at leading and that many of the leaders did not have a strong understanding of emotional intelligence (Moss, Ritossa, & Ngu, 2006). This study illustrated that leaders may believe that they are demonstrating empathy in leading teams, but their team members may have a completely different perception. This might help explain why there is a disparity in teams, and why some are productive and some are not.

Another study, conducted by Liao and Chuang (2007), explored transformational leadership with leaders and employees and measured employee performance, customer service, and work environment. The results from this study showed that when leaders used transformational leadership and were supportive with employees, it influenced the employees as a team in a positive manner (Liao & Chuang, 2007). One example was that customer service from employees increased in a positive direction (Liao & Chuang, 2007), thus illustrating the positive impact that leaders may have on teams when demonstrating empathy with employees. There have been numerous research studies (e.g. Moss, Ritossa, & Ngu, 2006; Liao & Chuang, 2007) conducted illustrating how transformational leadership and empathy from leaders has a positive impact on individual employees and teams of employees within an organizational setting. While empathy researchers have looked at transformational leadership and empathy from leaders within

organizations and the influence it has had with employees (e.g. Liao & Chuang, 2007),

what about how team leaders use empathy in leading teams of coworkers?

Purpose of the Study

There has been previous research involving leadership and empathy and how it is

beneficial for the organization as a whole (Fuqua & Newman, 2002), but there is no

previous research examining how peer team leaders use empathy in leading teams of

coworkers with the same levels of authority and monetary expectations. Previous

research (e.g. Thompson, 2011; Macaluso, 2003) has examined the use of empathy from

leaders and employees, but that involved leaders with authoritative power, which changes

the relationship between the leader and employee. For example, Thompson (2011)

discussed the importance of leaders using empathy with employees and how it goes a

long way in shaping the attitudes of employees (Thompson, 2011). The study focused on

leaders who were managers within the organization, thus having authority over the

employees. In another study, Macaluso (2003) described different types of tips for

improving emotional intelligence (Macaluso, 2003). While the tips are helpful, they do

not explain how team leaders used empathy with team members who were at the same

level as the team leaders. A recent study (Dietz & Kleinlogel, 2014) investigated how

leaders used empathy in making organizational decisions with employees. The results

showed that the role of empathy positively influenced the moral ethics of the leaders in

making decisions about employees (Dietz & Kleinlogel, 2014). This showed the positive

impact empathy may have with leaders and employees, but the leaders in this study had

authority over the employees.

Den Hartog and Belschak (2012) explained that transformational leadership and the use of empathy are beneficial to organizational leaders in particular situations, for example, when employees have low morale or become resistant to change. A study conducted by Lanaj, Johnson, and Lee (2016) investigated organizational leaders using transformational leadership with employees and the impact different aspects of transformational leadership had on employees. One aspect of transformational leadership that was examined in this study included leader consideration. Leader consideration was defined as showing concern for a group member (Lanaj, Johnson, & Lee, 2016). Multiple examples of leader consideration in the study resembled empathy. An example of this would be that an organizational leader related to the struggles that an employee was experiencing, and decided to show support for the employee. This shows that empathy is an important aspect to the dimension of leader consideration. After the researchers investigated the use of leader consideration, the results indicated that when leaders demonstrated consideration to employees, positive affect increased and negative affect decreased (Lanaj et al., 2016). This illustrated the idea that transformational leadership and empathy are valuable for an organization to use with employees.

Previous research has shown the benefits of leaders using empathy within the organization, but it is not yet understood how empathy is used by team leaders with the same level of authority as the people they are leading. The qualitative case study filled the missing gaps in previous literature by addressing how peer team leaders use empathy while leading teams of coworkers, and provided new information for future researchers to examine in depth. With a better understanding of how team leaders use empathy in leading teams of coworkers, it will provide future opportunities for research to be

conducted with quantitative methods, researching for the amount of empathy team leaders use with their teams of coworkers. This type of research can help organizations in the future understand more in depth information about the qualifications of being a successful leader with teams of coworkers.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because it provides insight into how team leaders use empathy in leading teams of coworkers. Originally developed by Burns (1978), transformational leadership was based upon the relationships between leaders and followers. Bass (1985) developed transformational leadership as a style that focuses on the follower, changing the way people think and how they are motivated, influencing their performance in a positive manner. Bass developed four dimensions of transformational leadership including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Idealized influence, known as charismatic leadership (Bass, 1998) involves the leader acting as a role model for the employees within an organization (Bass, 1985). The second dimension of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. This aspect of transformational leadership allows the leader to provide a clear vision for employees to understand and follow (Bass, 1985). This is critical for an effective leader because employees need to understand what the purpose and long-term goals are in order to be successful.

A study conducted by Wang and Howell (2010) explored the impact of transformational leadership with employees at the team level and the individual level. The results from the study showed that leaders should use different motivational tactics

with teams in comparison to individual employees (Wang & Howell, 2010). The third dimension of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. This refers to leaders encouraging the use of innovation and creative thinking from employees (Bass, 1985). Kaslow, Falendar, and Grus (2012) explained that one way for leaders to encourage employees to think creatively is to encourage employees to challenge process changes within the organization. The reasoning is not to be difficult with change, but to ensure that the changes are the best possible solutions for the organization (Kaslow, Falendar, & Grus, 2012). Aarons (2006) explained that when leaders promote the use of creative and innovative thinking from employees, it creates a work environment that is beneficial for the organization as a whole.

The fourth dimension of transformational leadership is individualized consideration. This dimension refers to the leader focusing on employee development and providing support and empathy when needed (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership focuses on the self-esteem of people (Bass, 1999). Along with acting as a mentor with employees, transformational leaders provide support to employees in a nurturing manner (Bass, 1998). Empathy is considered one dimension of social support (Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, & Whitten, 2010). When team members believe they are receiving support from the organization and leaders, it has a positive impact on outcomes such as performance and goal achievement (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). Previous research also shows that employees within organizations desire environments that are supportive in a social manner (Katzell & Thompson, 1990).

Transformational leadership theory involving empathy used by team leaders may have a positive impact on effective teams. Previous research has shown that when

employees do not receive the support they need from leaders, it can decrease the confidence, motivation, and commitment from the employee (Hu & Liden, 2011). Rubin, Munz, and Bonner (2005) also explained that it is important for leaders to have the ability to correctly read the emotions of others. It also has been pointed out that female leaders who were able to correctly read the emotions of employees had higher employee satisfaction ratings (Byron, 2007). While satisfaction ratings were high in that study, another study showed that there is a relationship between transformational leadership and employee attitudes in the workplace (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Humphrey (2012) found that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors of employees. Transformational leadership theory research (Zhang & Peterson, 2011) shows that the level of team performance increases with the use of transformational leadership, including different dimensions of leadership.

One dimension of transformational leadership is idealized consideration. Within this dimension is the aspect of the transformational leader providing support to employees, including empathy when needed (Bass, 1985). While research shows that empathy may have positive impact with organized work teams (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Thompson, 2011), the research does not explain how team leaders use empathy in leading organized work teams. By investigating how team leaders use empathy in leading organized work teams, this study expanded the current research on transformational leadership by explaining the numerous ways in which one dimension of transformational leadership, empathy, might be demonstrated within an organizational setting using teams of coworkers and team leaders.

By conducting an exploratory case study, insight can be gained surrounding team leaders and the use of empathy with their coworkers, including a deeper understanding of behaviors demonstrated by team leaders that illustrates empathy. As the team leaders explained how they used empathy in leading teams, it indicated practical implications within the organizational setting involving team leaders and their teams of coworkers. The insight gained for this study could educate organizational leaders and managers about how to use empathy in leading teams.

A case study conducted by Blattner and Bacigalupo (2007) involved leaders of an organization working with consultants in developing their emotional support in leading employees. The leaders did not know how to begin the development process, leading to an off-site training where the leaders discussed their thoughts on emotional support. A follow-up off-site training meeting with the consultants and the leaders illustrated that the leaders improved how they led their employees (Blattner & Bacigalupo, 2007). The study by Blattner and Bacigalupo shows that there is the need for leaders to develop different aspects of emotional support such as empathy, but organizational leaders are not sure how to start or what types of behaviors team members of organizations consider supportive. A study conducted by Zhang and Peterson (2011) explored the use of transformational leadership with teams of employees. The results showed that when leaders used transformational leadership with teams of employees, the teams had an increase in performance (Zhang & Peterson, 2011). The study is important because it shows the positive impact that transformational leadership and empathy have on teams of employees, yet there is no evidence to the types of behaviors used by leaders to demonstrate empathy.

When team members believe they are receiving support from the organization and leaders, it has a positive impact on outcomes such as performance and goal achievement (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996). Employees within organizations desire environments that are supportive in a social manner (Katzell & Thompson, 1990). Previous research also shows that when the leader and employees have a positive relationship, the employee has increased chances of access to resources and support from the leader (Vidyarthi, Erdogan, Anand, Liden, & Chaudhry, 2014). Gajendran and Joshi (2012) also noted that when an employee has a positive relationship with the leader, the employee has an increased voice within the organization. Zhang, Waldman, and Wang (2012) explained that when employees feel comfortable voicing their thoughts and concerns within the organization, other employees might begin to view them as leaders as well. This showed the importance of leaders using empathy with employees and the positive impact it may have on all stakeholders. There is the potential to discover a positive impact with teams' morale and productivity when the team leader demonstrates certain behaviors in regards to empathy. This would benefit organizations in the future as they can train team leaders in understanding and demonstrating certain empathetic behaviors when leading their teams of coworkers.

Team leaders of organizations who use empathy as one of the tools in leading their teams of coworkers may have more success within the organization than those who do not. The field of industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology has identified through previous research that there is value in organizations demonstrating care for their employees (Fuqua & Newman, 2002). The use of the case study approach will allow for more research about how peer team leaders within the automotive industry use empathy

in leading their teams of coworkers, as well as develop a psychological lesson that can lead to further research within the field of I-O psychology. Yin (1989) explained that one aspect of what makes an exemplary case study is using a real scenario where the case study is unique or cannot be easily duplicated (Yin, 1989). Using an organization with teams of employees and peer team leaders who have been working together on a regular basis will make for an exemplary case study. The case study will involve a real scenario where team leaders and team members work together regularly to accomplish organizational goals. What makes this scenario unique in comparison to other organizations is that the team leaders and team members are unionized, thus making both parties equals. The team leader position pays more financially; however, which potentially makes it more difficult for the team leader to rely on the assistance of team members in accomplishing organizational goals due to financial differences. It is important for team leaders to find ways to not only connect with team members, but also gain the respect of team members so that the team as a whole can accomplish organizational goals.

Investigating how team leaders use empathy with their teams of coworkers will help researchers in the future understand which type of behaviors seem more successful in comparison to others. The findings will offer more opportunities in the future for organizations to develop training strategies for the team leaders in focusing on using empathy in leading their teams of coworkers. I-O psychologists and researchers will gain more knowledge about the specific strategies and behaviors that team leaders use to demonstrate empathy with their teams. This study added scientific knowledge to the previous research by exploring exactly how leaders use empathy in leading their teams.

Leadership is influencing individuals to contribute to team goals (Kaiser et al., 2012).

The psychological view of leadership is considered to be a social influence process that involves leaders using interpersonal behaviors to motivate team members, whereas organizations typically view leadership as more of a strategy or work system (Kaiser et al., 2012). Many organizations are struggling with the different challenges that leaders constantly encounter such as restructuring, reorganizing, merging, and cost cutting (Bunker, 1997). One of the important factors in providing effective leadership within an organizational setting is to have leaders that understand and appeal to the emotional side of cultural change (Bunker, 1997). This case study explored exactly how team leaders use empathy with their coworkers in order to appeal to the emotional side of running the business in a team setting.

Research Design

The qualitative methodology for the research study is an exploratory case study. An exploratory case study was the best approach for this study because it involved interviewing team leaders from one particular organization, and inquiring into how they used empathy in leading their teams of hourly employees (Yin, 1989). Yin (1989) explained that a case study is an inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within "its real-life context" (p. 107), the boundaries between context and experiences that are not clear, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian (2011) explained that one advantage to using the case study approach is that it allows the researcher to gain a strong understanding of the phenomena being studied. This case study explored the phenomenon of empathy and how it is used from a team leader role in a real organization, in order to help teams of coworkers be successful in completing

organizational goals and tasks. The case study investigated how team leaders use empathy to lead their teams of coworkers.

The study was conducted using structured, open-ended conversational interviews with team leaders of a particular organization. The team leaders who participated in the study had to fit a certain criteria in order to participate in the study. Participants had to be hourly employees who represented the team leader position within a team of hourly employees. Participants included male and female adults, who were team leaders and used empathy in leading their work teams. The recruitment of participants included e-mailing all team leaders within the automotive factory, explaining the purpose of the research study, and criteria for participation. Team leaders who were interested in participating in the research study contacted the researcher to set up a time for the interview session. The criteria explained that in order to participate in the study, each participant had to be a current team leader, been in the position for a minimum of six months, and used empathy in leading their team of coworkers. Each interview took place with one participant in a one-on-one session for 30 minutes. The interview session involved asking open-ended questions to the participants in regards to how they used empathy in leading their teams of hourly employees. After all interviews were completed, the researcher e-mailed each participant with a copy of the transcript and requested that they make any corrections necessary to ensure accuracy throughout the data collection process.

Research Question

The research question was, **"**How do team leaders in leading organizational work teams use empathy with coworkers?**"** Empathy has been defined as "when one person

vicariously experiences the feelings, perceptions, and thoughts of another" (Pedersen & Pope, 2010, p. 841). Team leaders are considered to be individuals in a leadership role, who focus on the requirements and needs of the job tasks and team members, while also providing direction for the entire team (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001).

Assumptions and Limitations

Within the research study there were assumptions made by the researcher, as well as limitations to the study itself. One topic-specific assumption was that all potential participants used empathy in leading their teams of coworkers. This is an assumption because if there were team leaders who did not use empathy in leading their coworkers, then they would not want to volunteer for participation in the research study, due to not having information to share concerning using empathy in leading their teams of coworkers. It was assumed that participants were team leaders who used empathy in some fashion while leading their teams. A second assumption within the research study was that participants would give honest answers to questions that eventually begin to form patterns as common themes. This is a methodological assumption because it was assumed that there are particular behaviors with empathy that are successful with team leaders leading their coworkers.

One type of limitation that exists within the research study is the time each interview took place with participants. Some participants were interviewed at the beginning of their shift, while others were interviewed at the middle or end of their shift. This may have played a role in the attitudes of the participants during the time of interviews. Participants may have been tired at the end of their shift, thus leading them to not showing empathy for others at that time. Participants who were interviewed at the

beginning of their shift could have been more energized, thus leading them to have more empathy for others at that time. A delimitation to the study involved the researcher not interviewing team members (coworkers) of each team leader. The data are solely based upon the assumption that participants were truthful in their responses to answers. Without interviewing coworkers of each team leader, there is no way to hold each participant accountable for his or her responses. These limitations provide opportunity for future research to be conducted with team leaders and coworkers and how empathy is used.

Definition of Terms

For this research study, the researcher defined the term *empathy* as "when one person vicariously experiences the feelings, perceptions, and thoughts of another" (Pedersen & Pope, 2010, p. 841). This is an important construct to the study because it allowed each participant to give responses to their use of empathy based upon the same definition of empathy. This accomplished consistency in the definition of the construct. Examples given to participants as illustrations of empathy included when someone is having a bad day, going through personal issues, or having trouble working with another coworker or manager, and you have experienced these types of things as well, so it is easier to appreciate it from the employee's perspective. These examples helped participants gain a better understanding of the definition of empathy.

Another term that is important to understand is *coworker*. For purposes of the present study, "coworker" is a term that refers to hourly employees within a team. When participants responded to questions regarding how they use empathy with their coworkers, the term referred to the hourly members on their team that they lead. A *team*

consists of hourly coworkers, plus one team leader. Hourly coworkers and team leaders are unionized employees and are considered equals within the organization. The team leader position, however, pays more financially per hour due to the extra responsibilities given to that position. Hourly coworkers rotate with other coworkers on every job within the department for the team. The team leader does not participate in rotation, however, will assist coworkers in completing jobs if needed. The team leader position involves paperwork that needs to be completed along with other non-job rotation related tasks. Every team has a manager that oversees the team performance, but the managers have other responsibilities to complete on a daily basis. This means that the teams of coworkers are responsible for completing the jobs in the department, and if needed, the team leader will assist coworkers.

Researcher Biases for Consideration

It was important throughout the research study that the researcher set aside any biases and preconceptions about the research topic. The researcher has experience in working with an organization in qualitative research and understanding the importance of mitigating biases and preconceptions. The data analysis process for the research study analyzed the data into themes, without any preconceptions or biases from the researcher. One way that the researcher accomplished this was by using Yin's case study protocol (Yin, 1989). The case study protocol indicates that the researcher should conduct an overview of the study before actually conducting the study. The purpose for this allowing the researcher to think about the background information for the case or project, including sensitive issues, potential problems, how reports will be completed, and the particular audience for the reports (Yin, 1989). Creswell (2003) noted that in qualitative

research, the researcher would spend intensive time with participants, causing potential

for ethical and personal issues (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000). Creswell

explained that one way to help mitigate these issues is for the researcher to identify biases

before conducting the research study (Creswell, 2003). In addition to using the approach

of epoche, Eisner (1991) explained that it is the responsibility of the researcher to focus

on coherence and insight, rather than prejudgments (Eisner, 1991). Lincoln and Guba

(1985) also explained that truthfulness is something that the researcher can gain from

participants, particularly through the process of validation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In summary, this study investigated how team leaders within an automotive factory use

empathy in leading their teams of coworkers. After interviewing 14 participants, the

collected data was analyzed and common themes developed in responses from

participants. While there were multiple assumptions and limitations to the research

study, there is new information that came from responses from participants, which

provides future opportunities for more research to be conducted with the constructs of

empathy and leadership. There have been numerous research studies conducted

investigating the influence that empathy might have in the workplace. The following

literature review will examine the literature to date that addressed the role of empathy in

regard to employees and leadership within organizations.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

With empathy in leadership as the focus of the research topic, multiple styles of leadership, including resonant leadership (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005), situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977), and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) involve the use of empathy. Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) is one theory that directly pertains to the use of empathy. Transformational leadership involving the use of empathy from leaders may have a positive impact on effective teams. Previous research (Arnold, Connelly, Walsh, & Martin Ginis, 2015) has shown that when a leader is highly transformational, it is more likely that the leader will try to demonstrate empathy with employees, as well as understand their emotions. When transformational leaders demonstrate empathy with employees, it also involves deep acting (Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008), or getting truly involved with the employee, which helps increase authenticity (Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt, 2009). Research shows (Zhang & Peterson, 2011) that the transformational leadership style increases team performance. It will be essential to break down transformational leadership in terms of how the theory is used as a leadership style, what dimensions make up the theory, previous research involving the use of transformational leadership in organizational settings, and an analysis of the empirically-based research.

Many organizations have a disparity in teams. While some teams are successful in accomplishing organizations goals, other teams are under performing and not meeting organizational goals. Effective leaders of teams may be using empathy along with transformational leadership in leading successful teams (Zhang & Peterson, 2011). In

discussing the gap in the literature related to transformational leadership and the role of empathy in leading organized teams, it will be valuable to analyze key research and previous studies pertaining to these areas.

Theoretical Framework

Originally developed by Burns (1978), transformational leadership was based upon the relationships between leaders and followers. Bass (1985) developed transformational leadership as a style that focuses on the follower, changing the way people think and how they are motivated, influencing their performance in a positive manner. Bass developed four dimensions of transformational leadership including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). When leaders use all four components of transformational leadership with employees, it builds a working relationship that includes trust and respect (Bass, 1985). A breakdown of all four components of transformational leadership will explain how the theory works.

Idealized influence involves the leader acting as a role model for the employees within an organization (Bass, 1985). This component of transformational leadership is critical because it is the most efficient way for a leader to build a desired work environment for employees. By demonstrating respect to others, positive behaviors, morals, and a positive attitude, a leader can pass on these characteristics to employees. With a leader consistently leading with idealized influence, it will create a work environment over time that displays the characteristics reflecting the leader. Sosik and Cameron (2010) explained that transformational leaders have the ability to influence the culture of the work environment by setting good examples in areas such as behavior,

emotions, and responses to feedback. They also noted that one important factor in being an effective role model in a leadership position is to understand how the politics work within the organization, as well as previous experiences, and history that took place within the organization. Understanding the history and politics of the organization can help a leader with building relationships with current employees and understanding how they feel about previous history as well (Sosik & Cameron, 2010).

Schaubroeck, Lam, and Cha (2007) investigated the use of transformational leadership with organized teams in organizations in the United States and Hong Kong to see how this style of leadership influenced employees in different cultural settings. The results indicated that in multicultural settings, team values, and team potency were the most influential areas based upon transformational leadership (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Cha, 2007). The results indicated that the transformational leader has the ability and power to influence employees within an organizational setting in characteristics such as values. The results from the study also illustrated that transformational leadership influenced team performance when teams were high in collectivism (Schaubroeck et al., 2007). The researchers found that in organizations with organized teams that work close and well together, the leader has an increased chance to influence the employees. When the leader has the ability to influence the employees, it becomes an important factor because a transformational leader can influence teams that work well together to believe in different values such as integrity, morals, ethics, and respect, and then the employees will buy in to those concepts and potentially influence other employees. Influential leadership is a strategy for a leader to build a work environment that fits the culture that the organization desires. Transformational leaders have the ability to influence

employees in certain aspects such as team performance, morals, values, and integrity by demonstrating those qualities as a leader (Bass, 1985). While idealized influence is one critical aspect of transformational leadership, there are other areas of this theory that combine with influence to lead employees.

A second component of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. This component of transformational leadership entails the leader providing a clear understanding of a particular vision that is desired for employees to follow (Bass, 1985). When employees are able to understand the vision or future state for the organization as a whole, it becomes easier for the leader to motivate the employees. The understanding of the vision provides a purpose for employees to complete organizational goals, and gives meaning to the work completed by employees (Bass, 1985). When employees are inspired or motivated to complete organizational goals, it also builds a work environment with high energy and willingness to go beyond organizational goals. Effective transformational leaders are able to incorporate a vision that becomes motivating to others (Kaslow, Falender, & Grus, 2012).

While instilling a clear vision for employees to follow is essential for leaders to be inspirationally motivating, challenging employees to complete organizational goals is also a critical factor. Wang and Howell (2010) investigated the effects of transformational leadership with employees at an individual level as well as a team level. The results indicated that transformational leaders should use different methods for motivating individuals in comparison to motivating teams of employees (Wang & Howell, 2010). At the individual employee level, transformational leaders need to challenge the individual to complete organizational tasks, regardless of the level of

difficulty or ability to achieve it. At the team level, the leader can still challenge the team

to accomplish organizational goals, but also incorporate the importance of teamwork

(Wang & Howell, 2010). This is an important distinction in inspirational motivation

because there are times when the leader may need to motivate individuals to complete

tasks and goals, and other times when teams need motivation. If the transformational

leader challenges a team to complete a particularly tough task and does not encourage

them to work together in accomplishing the goal, the team could become confrontational

and divided (Wang & Howell, 2010). Without challenging an individual to complete a

task, the employee may not become motivated, thus not completing the goal successfully.

Understanding how to motivate each level is critical to the effectiveness of the leader in

inspiring motivation. While inspirational motivation is an important component to

transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), there are other components included in how

this theory works.

A third component of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. This

component involves leaders promoting the use of creative thinking and innovation (Bass,

1985). One of the major aspects of this concept is that leaders desire employees to think

of new ideas to help the organization, and do not use negative feedback or criticism when

ideas are not considered valid (Bass, 1985). One method for leaders to increase

intellectual stimulation for employees is to promote the mentality of challenging process

changes within the organization (Kaslow et al., 2012). While this seems like promoting

resistance to change, it is simply encouraging the process of critically thinking about

efficiency in regards to current and potential processes. When employees begin to think

critically about the efficiency of processes, it creates intellectual stimulation in other

aspects besides processes. Aarons (2006) explained that when transformational leaders encourage employees in several aspects including innovative thinking, it creates a culture that is beneficial to the entire organization (Aarons, 2006).

Another important factor in creating intellectual stimulation includes the process of the leader providing feedback. If a leader delivers feedback to an employee in a negative manner, it potentially will prevent the employee from voicing future innovative ideas. It is important for the leader to think about the process of delivering feedback before doing so to ensure that the feedback is supportive and encouraging, even if the innovative idea is not ideal for the organization (Kaslow et al., 2012). Empathy would be a valuable behavior to demonstrate as a leader when delivering feedback to employees. Feedback should be provided to employees on a consistent basis and delivered in a manner that is perceived as meaningful from the employee (Kaslow et al., 2012). This will help build the confidence and trust of the employee to continue to use creative thinking, which will help develop a culture with increased intellectual stimulation. While intellectual stimulation is a critical aspect of transformational leadership and how it works, multiple dimensions contribute to transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

The fourth component of transformational leadership is individualized consideration. This dimension involves the leader acting as a mentor with employees and addressing any issues or concerns that employees may have (Bass, 1985). The leader focuses on the development of the employees and provides support and empathy when needed, as well as acknowledges accolades or successful completions of organizational tasks (Bass, 1985). Individualized consideration includes the leader spending a great deal

of time with employees, providing support and demonstrating empathy and compassion to employees (Bass, 1985).

One major aspect of this dimension that is crucial to employees is the support from leaders in employee development. A study conducted by Hetland, Skogstad, Hetland, and Mikkelsen (2011) investigated transformational leadership and learning climate between leaders and employees within a particular organization. The results indicated that there was a significant connection between transformational leadership and opportunities to develop for employees (Hetland, Skogstad, Hetland, & Mikkelsen, 2011). One explanation for these results is that employees desired to learn new skills and competencies so that they could potentially move up within the organization (Hetland et al., 2011). It is also possible that the employees were willing to learn new skills and knowledge when they received support or empathy from the leader. When employees attempt to learn a new skill or competency, they will likely be more motivated to complete the learning process if they know they can receive support from the leader. Without that support, the employee may not complete the learning process due to "getting stuck" or confused (Hetland et al., 2011).

Another aspect of individualized consideration is the coaching or mentoring relationship between the leader and employee (Bass, 1985). A study conducted by Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, and Zagenczyk (2013) investigated the impact that leaders had on employees when the coaching relationship was abusive from the leader. Results indicated that when the leader demonstrated negative behaviors with the employee, or did not provide nearly the required support for the employee, the behavior from the employee turned negative or counterproductive (Shoss, Eisenberger, Restubog, & Zagenczyk,

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2013). When leaders demonstrated behaviors that were considered verbally abusive, the

employee would intentionally become counterproductive (Shoss et al., 2013). This

illustrated the importance in the coaching relationship between transformational leaders

and employees because if the employee perceives the relationship as negative, aspects

such as performance, morale, and productivity will decrease. If the employee perceives

the relationship as positive, then the employee is willing to develop knowledge and skills,

increasing performance and productivity (Shoss et al., 2013).

Bass (1985) developed transformational leadership as a style that focuses on the

follower, changing the way people think and how they are motivated, influencing their

performance in a positive manner. Bass developed four dimensions of transformational

leadership including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation,

and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). When leaders use all four components of

transformational leadership with employees, it builds a working relationship that includes

trust and respect. All four dimensions are essential for leaders to properly use

transformational leadership within an organizational setting. In order to use

transformational leadership in a positive manner, the use of empathy is vital. Without

using all of the dimensions, there is the potential for employees to misinterpret the

intentions of the leader.

Review of Research

Empathy is one dimension of social support (Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, &

Whitten, 2010). Previous research with empathy stated that empathy is an automatic

physiological response (Ferrari, Gallese, Rizzolatti, & Fogassi, 2003) with neurons

mirroring each other (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). In several studies conducted by

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Schumann, Zaki, and Dweck (2014), the results illustrated that participants could consciously increase and decrease the amount of empathy demonstrated based upon the level of difficulty in demonstrating empathy (Schumann, Zaki, & Dweck, 2014). This showed that it is possible for team leaders of organizations to determine how and when to demonstrate empathy with their teams of coworkers. Many organizations depend on organizational leaders to lead teams in completing tasks such as performance goals and achievements, while also keeping positive team morale. While employees desire social support from team leaders, it is unclear what role empathy has in leading teams. Teams that experience a decrease in morale and performance may not be receiving social support from team leaders. The use of empathy from team leaders can potentially increase performance and morale from teams. Sosik and Cameron (2010) explained that transformational leaders have the capability to shape the culture of a work environment by leading by example and modeling good behaviors in different areas such as emotions, behavior, and reactions to feedback.

When empathy is used in the workplace, it has many advantages. A study conducted by Lilius, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton, and Frost (2008) explored the frequency of empathy used with employees within a hospital. The researchers found that majority of the participants reported that they receive empathy primarily from coworkers with a frequency that ranged from occasionally to frequently. The results from the study also illustrated that when employees receive empathy in the workplace, it provides positive emotion, stronger organizational commitment, and leaves a longer, lasting impression on the employees in a positive manner (Lilius et al., 2008). The results from

this study provide evidence showing that it is beneficial for the organization when coworkers demonstrate empathy with other coworkers.

Another study conducted by Moon, Hur, Ko, Kim, and Yoo (2016) examined positive work-related identity as a mediator between empathy and employee outcomes. The study included 317 participants from multiple firms in South Korea. The results showed that when empathy is demonstrated in the workplace, it is associated with positive work-related indentities, an increase in organizational commitment, and a decrease in employee turnover (Moon et al., 2016). The researchers found that when employees receive empathy from others in the workplace, numerous positive employee outcomes take place. From a practical implication perspective, this is a major finding because organizational leaders may focus on using empathy in the workplace in order to achieve higher employee performance.

Previous research has shown that empathy in the workplace increases organizational commitment and employee performance; there are other advantages as well. A study conducted by Chu (2016) investigated the impact of empathy in a hospital with the nursing staff. The results showed that when the nursing staff received empathy from supervisors, coworkers, and residents, the organizational citizenship behaviors of the nurses increased. Chu explained that when the nursing staff received empathy from others, they believed that people cared about them as people. This also caused an increase in positive moods from the nursing staff (Chu, 2016). The final takeaway from this study illustrated that when nurses received empathy from others, the staff became more attentive to organizational responsibilities and going out of their way to help others

(Chu, 2016). These findings support previous research conducted by Lilius et al. (2008) in that empathy in the workplace increases positive behaviors from employees.

Previous research has shown that empathy has many advantages in the workplace (Lilius et al., 2008), (Chu, 2016), but not all organizations utilize empathy in the workplace. Tsai, Tsai, and Huang (2016) explored the experiences of nurses in a nursing home environment when transferring residents from nursing homes to emergency hospitals. The researchers found that nurses take care of residents while the residents are staying in the nursing home, however, when the residents are transferred to emergency hospitals, the nurses experience a disconnect from the resident and the family of the resident. This experience takes a negative toll on the nurses including discontinuity in family involvement, medical resources, and nurses' professional role (Tsai, Tsai, & Huang, 2016). The nurses spend their time taking care of residents and forming a bond with the residents and their families while in the nursing home. When the resident is transferred though, the communication stops and the nursing staff do not know the status of the resident. This illustrates how empathy can play a major role in relationships in positive outcomes as well as negative outcomes.

While empathy has an impact on relationships in general (Tsai, Tsai, & Huang, 2016), it also has an impact on relationships in the workplace. A study conducted by Moon, Hur, Ko, Kim, and Yoon (2014) examined the perceptions of employees in a corporate setting regarding the use of empathy from supervisors and upper management. The results indicated that the perceptions of the employees dictated their organizational attitudes and commitment (Moon et al., 2014). The researchers indicated that organizations should focus on how upper management behaves in front of the workforce,

including being respectful and demonstrating empathy with employees. Researchers also indicated that it is important for upper management to be aware of how employees perceive they are being treated, including fairness, trustworthiness, and ethical standards (Moon et al., 2014). These aspects of relationships between management and employees can increase or decrease the attitude and organizational commitment of employees based upon how employees perceive the relationship.

Different types of leadership styles provide more social support than others. Transformational leadership theory is a common style of leadership used by leaders within organizations to lead organized teams of employees. Bass (1985) developed four dimensions of transformational leadership including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). There has been previous research conducted on each dimension of transformational leadership in leading organized teams, including the positive impact empathy has in team performance (Farh, Seo, & Tesluk, 2012). Barbuto and Burbach (2006) found that employees rated their leaders in a positive manner when the leaders used transformational leadership and demonstrated high emotional intelligence (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006). A study conducted by Sosik, Avolio, and Kahai investigated the impact that different leadership styles have on group potency and effectiveness. The results showed that when leaders used transformational leadership, group potency and effectiveness increased significantly in comparison to when transactional leadership was used by leaders (Sosik, Avolio, & Kahai, 1997). Additionally, Schaubroeck, Lam, and Cha (2007) investigated how transformational leadership influenced employees in different cultural settings. The results from the study showed that transformational leadership had a significant impact

on team performance when teams were considered high in collectivism (Schaubroeck et al., 2007). The study also illustrated that transformational leaders may influence teams in particular areas such as morals and values.

While transformational leadership has four dimensions, the dimension where empathy plays a role in leadership is individualized consideration. This dimension involves the leader acting as a mentor with employees in an organizational setting and helping resolve issues that employees are concerned with (Bass, 1985). Along with acting as a mentor to employees, transformational leaders provide support to employees in a nurturing manner (Bass, 1998). Leaders who are effective with the use of empathy may have an easier time connecting with employees in the work environment. A study conducted by Hetland, Skogstad, Hetland, and Mikkelsen (2011) explored transformational leadership and learning climate between leaders and employees. The results showed that there was a strong connection between leaders demonstrating transformational leadership and opportunities for employees to focus on developing skills (Hetland, Skogstad, Hetland, & Mikkelsen, 2011). The researchers (Hetland et al., 2011) explained that one reason for the results was that the employees felt comfortable learning new skills from transformational leaders due to receiving emotional support. When employees believe that they are not receiving support from leaders, the results can become negative.

A study conducted by Shoss, Eisenberg, Restubog, and Zagenczyk (2013) explored the impact that leaders have on employees when using negative and abusive behavior to provide feedback. The results showed that employees' attitudes turned negative when they received negative and abusive feedback from leaders. In some cases

throughout the study, employees became counterproductive intentionally (Shoss, Eisenberg, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013). This shows the importance of leaders using empathy with employees and the potential consequences of not doing so. Bono, Foldes, Vinson, and Muros (2007) found that when leaders use transformational leadership and empathy with employees, the employees experience more happiness and optimism throughout the workday (Bono et al., 2007). While transformational leadership is considered a valuable style of leadership, there has been little research conducted examining how team leaders within transformational leadership use empathy in leading coworkers within organized work teams. Liao and Chuang (2007) explored transformational leadership with leaders and employees and measured employee performance, customer service, and work environment. The results from this study showed that when leaders used transformational leadership and were supportive with employees, it influenced the employees as a team in a positive manner (Liao & Chuang (2007). This illustrated the power of empathy within transformational leadership and the positive impact it has on employees, but it is still unclear how transformational leaders use empathy with employees. Previous research has shown the positive impact that transformational leadership and empathy has on employees within the work environment, yet it is unclear how leaders actually demonstrate empathy with employees.

Methodological Literature

The qualitative methodology for the research study is an exploratory case study. An exploratory case study was the best approach for this study because it involved interviewing team leaders from one particular organization and exploring how they used empathy in leading their teams of hourly employees (Yin, 1989). Yin explained that a

case study is an inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within "its real-life context" (p. 107), the boundaries between context and experiences in which they are not clear, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. There are three types of case studies: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive (Yin, 1989). This study used the exploratory approach because it explored how team leaders use empathy with their coworkers. Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian (2011) explained that one advantage to using the case study approach is that it allows the researcher to gain a strong understanding of the phenomena being studied. This case study explored the phenomenon of empathy and how it is used from a team leader role in a real organization, in order to help teams of coworkers be successful in completing organizational goals and tasks. With a variety of teams and team leaders within the organization, it is not clear from previous research studies involving empathy, how team leaders use empathy to help provide support to their teams of coworkers.

While the case study approach adds value by investigating a particular phenomenon such as empathy from team leaders, it was also important to consider the participants taking place within the study. The use of structured interviews allowed for each participant to feel safe about being open and honest about their team members and how they use empathy in leading their teams of coworkers. Other approaches were considered along with structured interviews, such as observation and reviews of documents. There were obstacles that would have limited the results from using either of these approaches during the data collection process. If participants knew they were being observed, it potentially would have altered their behavior in a manner that would have skewed the results (Yin, 1989). In order to use documents to analyze particular

behaviors, a lawyer would have had to gain legal permission from the human resources

department of the corporation, according to the personnel director of the facility. The use

of interviews not only made the most sense, but also allowed participants to feel

comfortable throughout the data collection process. Yin (1989) explained that an

exploratory case study fits for this type of research because it involved a particular

organization with a unique dynamic including a unionized staff of employees.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Transformational leadership theory is a style of leadership used by leaders within

many organizations in multiple industries as a method for leading organized teams of

employees. There are four dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) with

empathy being a major aspect of one of those four dimensions. While there has been

previous research (e.g. Liao & Chuang, 2007; Sosik & Cameron, 2010) investigating the

use of transformational leadership and each dimension in leading employees at the

individual and team levels, there has not been research conducted investigating the role of

empathy in leading organized teams. Moss, Ritossa, and Ngu (2006) conducted a study

investigating leadership behavior and the role of emotional intelligence within a

particular organization. The researchers administered a survey to managers and their

employees asking questions pertaining to the style of leadership that the managers used in

leading their employees. The results showed that many of the leaders believed that they

used transformational leadership and perceived emotional intelligence as one of the

strengths in their leadership style (Moss, Ritossa, & Ngu, 2006). Many of the employees

answered the survey differently, stating that they did not believe that the leaders used

transformational leadership or had a working knowledge of emotional intelligence. The

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most consistent results in terms of agreeableness came from employees and leaders who were extraverted (Moss et al., 2006). This outcome could be due to the result of more communication between employees and leaders who were extraverted. Moss, Ritossa, and Ngu concluded that leaders who used transformational leadership and had a working knowledge of emotional intelligence and had employees who agreed with those statements had better working relationships in comparison to employees and leaders who disagreed in the survey (Moss et al., 2006). Moss, Ritossa, and Ngu investigated transformational leadership and emotional intelligence, which empathy is a dimension of, but the study did not inquire about the role of empathy in detail. There was no research measuring the different types of metrics with employees including productivity, performance, and efficiency. This research showed that there is the potential for leaders of organizations to believe that they use transformational leadership and have a working knowledge of emotional intelligence when their employees disagree (Moss et al., 2006).

Liao and Chuang (2007) investigated transformational leadership with leaders and employees within an organization and measured employee performance, customer service relations, and work environment. The researchers hypothesized that the use of transformational leadership by leaders would increase employee performance, customer relations, and the attitudes within the work environment (Liao & Chuang, 2007). Their findings indicated that the use of transformational leadership was able to develop a work environment dedicated to helping customers, but at the individual level, some employees did not share the same customer service attitudes. The research also illustrated that the attitudes at the individual level for employees was connected with employee performance in providing services (Liao & Chuang, 2007). The results showed that transformational

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leadership used by leaders can influence the work environment as a whole, but at the individual level, there still may be employees with attitudes that do not reflect that of the entire group.

Liao and Chuang (2007) focused on transformational leadership used by leaders of an organization and measured factors such as employee performance, attitudes of the work environment, and customer relations; however, it did not break down the dimensions of transformational leadership or empathy. While the results of the study were able to identify a connection between transformational leadership and attitudes of employees as a collective unit, there is no empirical data explaining how transformational leadership impacted the attitudes of the group of employees. There is the possibility that empathy had a major role in developing the attitudes, but it also could have been other reasons besides empathy.

Burris, Ayman, Che, and Min (2013) investigated the perceptions of Caucasians and Asian Americans in regard to their managers' style of leadership and the effectiveness of that style. The purpose of their study was to inquire about stereotypes to determine whether they played a role in the perceptions of the employees about their manager. The results indicated that majority of Caucasians had positive perceptions about the effectiveness of their manager's style of leadership when the manager was Caucasian. Asian American participants also believed that their manager's style of leadership was effective when the manager was also Asian American (Burris, Ayman, Che, & Min, 2013). The researchers believed that these results took place due to cultural differences and upbringings of Caucasians and Asian Americans. Transformational leadership was the common style of leadership used by effective managers regardless of

ethnicity. The research study investigated leadership styles used by effective and ineffective managers as perceived by employees, but the study did not investigate why transformational leaders were perceived as effective managers. With four dimensions of transformational leadership, it would have been interesting to collect data from participants as to why they believed their manager was effective using transformational leadership (Burris et al., 2013). The research (Burris et al., 2013) showed evidence that employees' perceive transformational leaders as effective managers with employees, but it is still unclear as to what exact characteristics of those leaders help make them effective in an organized team setting.

One of the critical gaps in the literature is that the research only taps into the impact that transformational leadership has on employees at the individual and team levels. While there is research on each of the four dimensions of transformational leadership, there is no evidence explaining the role of empathy through transformational leadership with organized teams. Individualized consideration is the dimension of transformational leadership that involves the use of empathy with followers (Bass, 1985). While there have been studies focusing on individualized consideration from leaders in organizations (Liao & Chuang, 2007), the research does not break down the aspect of empathy.

Another missing link in the gap in literature is the focus on the role of empathy with leading organized teams. Most of the research focuses on leaders using transformational leadership with employees at the individual level (Bass, 1985). There are few research studies that investigate transformational leadership with employees at the team level, and the studies that do investigate that phenomenon do not analyze the

construct of empathy at all. There are important aspects of transformational leadership

and empathy at the team level that are unknown at this time. It is critical to understand if

transformational leaders use empathy in leading organized teams, as well as the role

empathy plays with teams within an organizational setting.

Summary

In many types of industries, organizations use the team concept in order for

employees to successfully accomplish organizational goals. Many teams of employees

have some type of team leader to help guide and support the teams in accomplishing

these goals. The leaders use different types of leadership styles to help the employees

become successful in achieving goals such as productivity and performance metrics. One

leadership style that is used by leaders is transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

Transformational leadership consists of four dimensions: idealized influence,

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass,

1985). When transformational leaders use the four dimensions properly, it creates a work

environment that is full of energy, motivation, and compassion. Employees are

motivated to complete organizational tasks and go beyond the expectations of the

organization. Employees are willing to focus on their development, eager to learn new

skills and knowledge with the support of the leader when needed. Transformational

leaders encourage employees to think in creative and innovative ways to improve

processes and make the organization more efficient (Bass, 1985).

While there has been previous research (e.g., Liao & Chuang, 2007; Thompson,

2011) conducted on transformational leadership in leading employees, there is a gap in

the literature in regards to transformational leadership and the role of empathy in leading

organized teams. Most of the research conducted with transformational leadership

evaluates the effectiveness of the style and the impact it may have on employees in

positive and negative ways (e.g. Sosik & Cameron, 2010). The research has shown that

transformational leadership has a positive impact in leading employees at the individual

and team levels, but it is still unknown what the role of empathy is in leading organized

teams. Chapter 3 includes a discussion on the methodology used for collecting data from

team leaders in regard to how each team leader uses empathy in leading their teams of

coworkers.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Previous research has explored leadership and empathy and how they benefit the organization as a whole (Fuqua & Newman, 2002), but failed to describe how peer team leaders use empathy while leading teams comprised of coworkers with the same level of authority and monetary expectations. Previous research (e.g., Thompson, 2011; Macaluso, 2003) has examined the use of empathy from leaders and employees, but that involved leaders with authoritative power, which changes the relationship between the leader and employee. The research question in the present study was, **"**How do team leaders in leading organizational work teams use empathy with coworkers?" This qualitative case study filled the missing gaps in previous literature by addressing how peer team leaders use empathy while leading teams of coworkers, and provided new information for future researchers to examine in depth. With a better understanding of how team leaders use empathy in leading teams of coworkers, it will provide future opportunities for research to be conducted with quantitative methods, researching for the amount of empathy team leaders use with their teams of coworkers.

Background of Researcher

The researcher has conducted trainings involving organized teams of employees within organizations for 15 years. Unionized organizations add a new dynamic to the team concept due to additional shop rules that non-unionized organizations do not necessarily work with. Unionized employees are considered equals, regardless of job roles and descriptions, which makes it more challenging for union employees to take on the role of team leader within an organization. The researcher wanted to inquire in to

how unionized team leaders use empathy in order to lead their teams of coworkers. To accomplish this, the researcher conducted interviews with team leaders who were willing to participate in answering structured questions concerning the use of empathy and the impact it has on their teams of coworkers. Participants were willing to openly share how they use empathy with coworkers and the advantages and disadvantages that come from using empathy while leading their teams.

Research Design

The qualitative methodology for this research study was an exploratory case study. An exploratory case study was the best approach for this study because it involved interviewing team leaders from one particular organization and inquiring into how they used empathy in leading their teams of hourly employees. Yin (1989) explained that a case study is an inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within the real world, and the boundaries between context and experiences that are not clear, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian (2011) explained that one advantage to using the case study approach is that it allows the researcher to gain a strong understanding of the phenomena being studied (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011).

The present study was conducted using structured, open-ended conversational interviews with team leaders of a particular organization. The team leaders who participated in the study fit specific criteria. Participants were hourly employees who represented the team leader position within a team of hourly employees. Participants included male and female adults, who are team leaders and use empathy in leading their work teams. Participation was voluntary and the researcher contacted potential participants through e-mail addresses provided by the organization. Each interview took

place with one participant in a one-on-one session for 30 minutes. The interview sessions involved asking open-ended questions to the participants in regards to how they use empathy in leading their teams of hourly employees. After all interviews were completed, the researcher reviewed each transcript with each participant to ensure all data collected was accurate.

Population and Sample

For the organization selected for this case study, the population is comprised of team leaders within a particular automotive manufacturing plant that utilized teams of employees to complete organizational goals. Every team was responsible for building different components that go in to completing different types of transmissions. One example of an organizational goal is for each team to build a particular amount of components per shift. Another important organizational goal for each team includes building parts and components with great quality. Each team had specific quality measures that each part or component must meet in order for the part to be considered approved. If a part does not meet quality standards, there is a protocol that takes place for the part to be repaired or scrapped. Every job within a department is different, so teams rotate team members from job to job to support the physical demands of each job. There are manufacturing plants that do not use teams to complete organizational goals, and for this case study it was important to work with an organization that uses teams and has team leaders for each team. The sample size was 14 team leaders who fit the criteria for participation. After interviewing 14 team leaders, data saturation was met. Data saturation has been defined as the point in data collection where no new information can be collected due to information being repetitive (Saumure & Given, 2008). Rubin and

Rubin (1995) explained that as the researcher hears new themes forming from interviews, the study should add more participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Weiss (1994) also explained that the researcher should stop the data collection process when information becomes repetitive and no new information is being presented (Weiss, 1994). Data saturation was concluded for this study after interviewing 14 participants due to hearing repetitive information. The last two participants in the interview process gave responses to questions that were already listed from previous participants, thus ensuring repetition of themes. Bertaux (1981) explained that in some studies, the researcher might complete data saturation before interviewing the expected amount of participants (Bertaux, 1981).

Sampling Procedures

For the qualitative case study, the sampling strategy was a purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling was appropriate for the case study because it involved interviewing participants who fit specific criteria. Oliver (2006) explained that one advantage to using purposive sampling is that the participants may have a great deal of knowledge or expertise with the particular phenomena being investigated (Oliver, 2006). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to identify and select participants with experience involving leading teams of coworkers and the use of empathy. With empathy as the main topic, it was critical to interview team leaders of organized work teams of coworkers. Once the participants volunteered, the researcher set up a time and location for each interview with the assistance of the personnel director of the organization. This was required because it is the responsibility of the personnel director to determine when participants can stop working and spend time answering questions. There was an informed consent form provided for each participant to sign before each interview took

place. The interviews took place in the office of the participant or in a conference room

provided by the organization.

The researcher took handwritten notes for each question as participants explained

their responses. After each participant finished responding to a question, the researcher

would read back those notes to ensure accuracy in note taking. Once the entire interview

was completed, the researcher went through each question and response a second time to

ensure the accuracy of data collection. After interviewing 11 participants, the researcher

began to hear consistency in responses from participants for each question and response.

The researcher interviewed three additional participants to ensure data saturation was

met. Once all interviews were completed, the responses from participants were placed in

to categories for each question. Once responses were placed into categories, the

researcher was able to identify themes for each question, including behaviors for how

team leaders use empathy and the advantages and disadvantages team leaders notice from

their coworkers. The only disadvantage to the method of data analysis involved outlier

responses from participants due to the size of the team. Some teams have jobs where

there is not much interaction between team leader and coworkers on a daily basis. This

caused some participants to have responses that were outliers or did not apply to the

questions asked during the interview. The responses that did not apply to the questions

asked during the interview were placed into categories as well. Because there were only

a couple of participants where this applied, the category did not develop into a theme in

the results section. The other participants involved in the study had numerous responses

that fit into common themes. The two participants with responses that did not apply to

the questions did not alter the results of themes due to interviewing many team leaders from many areas of the facility.

Data Analysis

The data analysis approach for this study was an exploratory technique described by Yin (1989). The first step in this process is making an initial proposition in regard to a policy or social behavior (Yin, 1989). Yin explained that an initial proposition helps the process of exploratory and pattern matching (Yin, 1989). The initial proposition for this case study was to investigate how team leaders who lead organizational teams of hourly coworkers use empathy. The case study focused on team leaders within an automotive factory and how they use empathy with the teams of coworkers (hourly employees) that they lead on a daily basis. The parameters of the case study focus on the relationship between team leaders and their coworkers, and how the team leaders use empathy. Nine questions were asked to participants involving the use of empathy from the team leader position and how the use of empathy impacts the team dynamic. The nine questions are listed in table 1.1 accordingly.

Table 1. Interview Questions

What type of leadership qualities makes you successful as a leader?
How do you use empathy in leading your team?
What types of situations occur with your team that offers an opportunity to use empathy?
What types of responses do you get from your team members when you demonstrate empathy?
What factors determine if you decide to use empathy or not?

Could you potentially demonstrate more empathy in certain situations?
What are the benefits of using empathy?
Does your boss demonstrate empathy with you? If yes, how specifically?
How does the use of empathy impact the morale of your team?

The next step involved the researcher analyzing the responses from participants, which formed common themes. When several participants repeated a response to a particular question, the response was placed in to a theme for that particular question. As an example, many participants explained that one benefit to using empathy with team members is that the team members were willing to help the team leader out with tasks in the future. This type of response became a common theme and categorized as "reciprocation." This process helped take the content from participants and form themes for the construct of empathy. After interviewing 14 participants, multiple themes formed due to repetition in responses from participants. After interviewing 14 participants, responses became redundant, thus reaching data saturation. Chapter 4 will present the results from the study, including themes that developed from participants and how team leaders find empathy as a resource in leading their teams of employees.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Introduction to Results

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present the results from interviews with participants and illustrate how the results factor in with team leaders and how they use empathy in leading their teams of coworkers. This chapter will conduct a breakdown of the background of the study, the research methodology applied to data analysis, and the presentation of data and results of analysis.

Data and Results of Analysis

Participants for the study included team leaders in a large factory who lead teams of coworkers that range from four to 15 coworkers per team. Team leaders are responsible for ensuring that their team reaches their production goal on a daily basis, as well as completing other responsibilities such as relieving coworkers for breaks, completing audits for their work area, and paperwork for various projects such as safety protocols and parts made. The numerous responsibilities make the team leader position challenging because team leaders have to balance running their area successfully on a day to day basis, while also ensuring that they are providing support to their coworkers as needed. This study included 14 participants in total, 13 male and one female, with an age range from 35-65 years. All 14 participants had a wide range of experience at the team leader position within the factory, ranging from 2 to 30 years of experience. Twelve of the participants had been team leaders for multiple teams within the factory as well. The results from interviewing 14 participants show that there are many positive aspects related to team leaders using empathy as a tool in leading their teams of coworkers.

Participant 1

Table 2.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 1

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Reciprocation	Verbal form of appreciation Coworkers help team leader accomplish tasks
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Listening to coworkers' personal and professional problems Helping coworkers' complete tasks Finding ways to relate to coworkers
Relationship building	Engaging coworkers in social activities

Themes and Patterns for Participant 1

  Theme 1 reciprocation. Participant 1 explained that the use of empathy has numerous benefits for the team leader. The biggest benefit that Participant 1 described was receiving support from team members throughout each shift. When the team leader would demonstrate empathy with coworkers, the coworkers would take notice of the support from the team leader. Participant 1 explained that often after demonstrating empathy with coworkers, the team leader would receive a verbal form of appreciation such as "thank you" or "I really appreciate that." In addition to the team leader receiving verbal appreciation, coworkers also provide support for the team leader without the team leader asking for help or support.

Patterns. One pattern that illustrated reciprocation included coworkers helping the team leader accomplish tasks throughout the day. One example that the participant described included coworkers willing to fill out a team board that displays metrics on a daily and weekly basis for team production. This is normally a responsibility that belongs to the team leader, but as Participant 1 mentioned "team members are willing to help me out if I am willing to help them out." A second pattern described by Participant 1 included verbal forms of appreciation. When the team leader demonstrated empathy with coworkers, many of the coworkers responded with gratitude by saying "thank you."

Theme 2 team leader offering supportive behaviors. Participant 1 explained that there are multiple ways of demonstrating empathy with coworkers, but the biggest impact included offering support in any way possible. Patterns that were described by the team leader included listening to each coworker's personal and professional issues, finding ways to relate to coworkers, and physically helping coworkers complete their jobs when they fall behind. The team leader shared a personal example with a coworker where the coworker was going through a hard time personally, and the team leader offered a prayer with the individual. This illustrated the team leader finding a way to support coworkers that does not necessarily include working on the job.

Patterns. Participant 1 explained that it was important to demonstrate supporting behaviors to coworkers in numerous ways. One example of demonstrating supporting behaviors included listening to personal and professional issues that coworkers would express. Besides listening to coworkers' issues, the team leader would also help coworkers complete required tasks, and provide relief on the job. In addition to helping team members on their jobs, the team leader would also find ways to relate with each

person on the team. One example of doing this included sharing stories about children's'
sporting events and other activities.

       Theme 3 relationship building. When asked about the impact that empathy has
on the team as a whole, Participant 1 explained that the use of empathy improves the
morale of the entire team. The team leader elaborated that the team has weekly lunches
and occasionally has potlucks. This also helps the team continue to build relationships
with other coworkers within the team. The team leader also noted that everyone feels
included in the team dynamic. "There is fellowship in our team, where everyone feels a
part of the team."

       Patterns. One pattern that was described by the team leader included relationship
building with the entire team. One example of this included the entire team eating lunch
together, conducting activities together outside of the workplace, and carrying their own
weight within the workplace. Another pattern that illustrates the positive impact that
empathy has on the team culture is that everyone carries his or her own weight on the job.
"No one takes advantage of people."

Participant 2

Table 3.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 2

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Engaging and recognizing coworkers	Teamwork Team bonding
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Offering advice to coworkers when needed Helping coworkers complete tasks

Themes and Patterns for Participant 2

      Theme 1 engaging and recognizing coworkers. One advantage for the team leader using empathy with coworkers is that it creates a better work culture for the entire team. Participant 2 explained that when the team as a whole, feels the positive energy in the workplace, production and attitudes increase. This makes the job easier for the team leader, as he or she does not have to focus as much on resolving personal problems between coworkers. When production increases, such as the team as a whole builds more products than technically required, the team leader does not have to fill in for coworkers and get them caught up on their jobs. This allows the team leader to focus on other responsibilities such as paperwork and supply runs.

      Patterns. Participant 2 said that the biggest benefit to using empathy with coworkers was that the coworkers worked better on their jobs and had better relationships with other coworkers within the team. Patterns that helped illustrate this theme included all coworkers willing to help out others on the job. One example of this involved a coworker struggling learning a new job in the department, and another coworker willingly helped teach the job to the coworker. This is normally the responsibility of the team leader, however, another coworker was willing to help the individual out. Another pattern for a better work culture included the team having lunch together on a regular basis. When the team decides to have lunch together, everyone participates, which helps build relationships and makes everyone feel included in the team dynamic.

      Theme 2 team leader offering supportive behaviors. The second theme from interviewing Participant 2 included the team leader offering supportive behaviors to coworkers. The team leader explained that this is an important aspect of the job because

the entire team needs to understand that the team leader is willing to help out when possible. When team members understand that the team leader is a valuable resource, they begin to trust the team leader, thus improving the relationship over time. Participant 2 also noted that when offering supportive behaviors to coworkers, the coworkers' attitude and energy becomes more positive, thus improving the team dynamic.

Patterns. When asked how the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers, Participant 2 explained that the most common way was by offering supportive behaviors to coworkers. One pattern that the team leader focused on was offering advice. This includes personal issues as well as professional issues. Participant 2 acknowledged an understanding of when it is appropriate to offer advice and when it is not the best approach. "Sometimes the team member just wants to vent or let out steam." The team member explained that just by listening to coworkers' issues, the coworkers appreciate and respect the team leader. The last pattern included the team leader helping coworkers on the job. This includes helping coworkers catch up on the job and working the job so that the coworkers can take a restroom break.

Participant 3

Table 4.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 3

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Relationship building	Gaining respect from coworkers Offering advice
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Offering advice Helping coworkers' complete tasks

Themes and Patterns for Participant 3

 Theme 1 relationship building. Participant 3 explained that the biggest benefit of using empathy with coworkers is that it allows for the team leader and coworkers to build and further develop relationships. The team leader also acknowledged that by using empathy with coworkers, the team members tend to develop the relationships with other coworkers as well, not just the team leader. Participant 3 explained that it may be difficult at times to get to know and understand coworkers on a personal level due to the nature of the jobs, and the use of empathy provides an opportunity for the team leader to gain a better understanding of each coworker on a personal.

 Patterns. Participant 3 described two patterns of attempting to build relationships with coworkers. Some examples given were discussing the personal lives of coworkers' families, such as children and family events. One pattern described included the team

leader using empathy to gain the respect of coworkers, which helps with relationship development. The team leader would do this in multiple ways. One example involved the team leader relieving coworkers for restroom breaks. Another example included the team leader explaining the rationale for particular business decisions. Another pattern included the team leader occasionally providing personal advice with coworkers when deemed appropriate by the team leader. This helped the team leader show coworkers that they can trust the team leader with certain personal or professional problems.

Theme 2 team leader offering supportive behaviors. Participant 3 explained that the best way to demonstrate empathy was by offering supportive behaviors with coworkers. By supporting coworkers, the team leader gains value in the team dynamic. Team members have a better attitude with the team leader and with other coworkers throughout the day, and the day goes by quicker for everyone. The team leader explained that it may be difficult in certain situations to offer support to coworkers due to the hectic atmosphere, but Participant 3 explained that eventually he or she would check in on each coworker to see if they need any support. This shows the entire team that the team leader does care about them.

Patterns. Participant 3 described multiple patterns that alluded to offering supportive behaviors to coworkers as a way of demonstrating empathy. One pattern was offering advice from time to time. The team leader elaborated that when offering advice, coworkers build a connection with the team leader, as they understand that the team leader understands and is interested in helping them out. A second pattern mentioned includes helping coworkers catch up on their jobs. Some jobs in a rotation are difficult to complete within the time given, so the team leader will help coworkers catch up on

making parts, as well as provide relief for coworkers if they need a restroom break or need to make an emergency phone call.

Participant 4

Table 5.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 4

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Relationship building	Building trust with coworkers Increased morale of coworkers
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Team leader making decisions in best interest of coworkers Helping coworkers complete tasks

Themes and Patterns for Participant 4

 Theme 1 relationship building. Participant 4 explained that relationship building is a vital aspect of being a team leader and using empathy with coworkers. The team leader went on to elaborate about the many advantages of building relationships with coworkers. "When the team observes me helping and talking with other team members, they notice I am here to help everyone." The team leader explained that the attitudes of the entire team improve not only with the team leader, but also with the other members on the team as well. This also helps create a better team atmosphere throughout the day and the week.

 Patterns. Participant 4 described the importance of using empathy with coworkers and the biggest benefit was the development of relationships. "You cannot be successful as a team leader without using empathy." One pattern involved building trust

with coworkers. Participant 4 explained that as long as the team leader is using empathy appropriately with coworkers, the coworkers would build trust and respect for the team leader. If empathy is overused, then the team leader runs the chance of coworkers attempting to take advantage of the team leader. The second pattern described by Participant 4 included the attitudes of coworkers. "Team members will smile and have a higher morale." Participant 4 also mentioned that the use of empathy would positively impact the morale of the entire team as well.

Theme 2 team leader offering supportive behaviors. The second theme described by Participant 4 included the team leader offering supportive behaviors to coworkers. The team leader explained that it is important to always show support for coworkers when possible. When the team leader provides supporting behaviors to coworkers, the coworkers appreciate the extra effort from the team leader, and are more willing to cooperate with the team leader in the future. Participant 4 also explained that the entire team is more willing to help each other complete organizational tasks after observing the team leader provide support for someone. It sets a good example for others to follow.

Patterns. Participant 4 described patterns of behavior that illustrate offering support to coworkers. One pattern included looking out for the best interests of the individual. Participant 4 elaborated that he or she would never ask a coworker to complete a task that the team leader would not do. The coworkers find this behavior as a way of showing respect for the entire team. A second pattern included the team leader relieving coworkers on the jobs within the rotation. "Coworkers find it helpful when I step in and take over the job so that they can have an extra few minutes of break time."

In doing these behaviors, the team leader mentioned that the coworkers are cooperative in completing tasks and jobs efficiently, and the team becomes more flexible.

Participant 5

Table 6.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 5

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Recognition	Attitudes of coworkers Building positive team morale
Getting team members involved in the business	Entire team making decisions together Team leader allowing time for coworkers to find solutions on their own

Themes and Patterns for Participant 5

Theme 1 recognition. The first theme that developed from interviewing Participant 5 included positive team morale. The team leader understood that by demonstrating empathy with coworkers, the entire team morale increased in a positive manner. The team leader explained that the use of empathy became an important tool as a team leader, because the team as a whole is more productive in completing organizational tasks when the morale is high. High team morale also makes the job easier for the team leader as there are fewer conflicts between coworkers in comparison to when the morale is low.

Patterns. Participant 5 found that the biggest benefit to using empathy with coworkers is that the team members felt better about their jobs from a morale perspective. One pattern that described this theme included the attitudes of coworkers. When the

team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers, the coworkers work better with each other in terms of cooperativeness. Coworkers are willing to help each other out when needed, and many times, the coworkers will help each other without anyone asking to do so. A second pattern for this theme includes the recognition that coworkers feel when the team leader demonstrates empathy. "When I demonstrate empathy, they (coworkers) feel better about themselves, like I recognize them." The team leader explained that this also makes the team as a whole feel better about the work they completed at the end of the shift.

Theme 2 getting team members involved in the business. Participant 5 explained that along with team morale, it is important for coworkers to be involved in different aspects of the business. Usually in the factory environment, the team leader is responsible for running the business end of the team dynamic, while the coworkers focus on production goals. The team leader pointed out that by getting coworkers involved in the business, the level of commitment increases from each member. The team leader also explained that there are times when the coworkers have better solutions to fixing problems in comparison to the team leader, so it makes sense to allow the coworkers to attempt to resolve problems as well.

Patterns. A second theme from Participant 5 included patterns of getting coworkers involved in multiple aspects of the business. One particular pattern included letting the team make decisions as a group. This included how the team rotates on each job within the department, how often each coworker rotates on each job, who conducts training for new team members, and troubleshooting problems that may arise with machines. The team leader acknowledged that at first, this was difficult to do, but after

realizing the benefits of getting coworkers more involved, it makes it better in the long run for the entire team. Participant 5 also described a pattern of being patient with coworkers, and allowing for them to find the answers to problems on their own. "When the team sees that I let them figure things out on their own, they understand that I trust them to manage the business." Again, this helps the team build relationships with each other, and they feel the recognition of the team leader in terms of competence to run the business.

Participant 6

Table 7.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 6

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Recognition	Verbal form of appreciation Coworkers help team leader accomplish tasks
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Providing relief on the jobs for coworkers Being patient with coworkers on the jobs Listen to coworkers issues

Themes and Patterns for Participant 6

Theme 1 recognition. The first theme that developed from interviewing Participant 6 included coworkers recognizing that team leader after the team leader demonstrates empathy. The team leader explained that when coworkers recognize the efforts of the team leader, it becomes more encouraging for the team leader to continue to

use empathy with the team. Receiving recognition from coworkers also helps the team leader understand that the efforts are appreciated, and the coworkers are not attempting to take advantage of the team leader's kindness.

Patterns. Participant 6 explained that the biggest benefit of demonstrating empathy with coworkers is that coworkers will recognize the team leader in multiple fashions. One pattern that illustrates this was that coworkers would verbally recognize the team leader by saying "thank you." The team leader mentioned that while this does not seem like much in terms of rewards, it goes along way when working with the same team of coworkers on a daily basis. Another pattern alluding to reciprocation involves the coworkers telling others how helpful the team leader is throughout each shift. "When my team sees what I do for them, they will tell other teams about me." This makes the team leader feel good about demonstrating empathy with coworkers. Participant 6 also described that coworkers will provide compliments to the team leader about the skills the team leader demonstrates on a daily basis.

Theme 2 team leader offering supportive behaviors. The team leader described a theme of offering supportive behaviors to coworkers throughout each shift. Participant 6 explained that it was important to always be fair about offering support, indicating that if he or she offered support to one coworker, then it is critical to offer the same support to every coworker on the team. This shows the entire team that the team leader is willing to help everyone out and does not have particular coworkers that receive more help compared to others.

Patterns. Participant 6 mentioned that the most common way of demonstrating empathy with coworkers was by providing support to coworkers when needed. One

pattern of this included relieving coworkers of their jobs for small breaks. "My whole team knows that I will always cover them when they need it." The team leader explained that he or she does this for every coworker within the team, and that each coworker understands and appreciates the fair treatment that the team leader provides for everyone. The team leader also described a pattern of showing patience with coworkers on their jobs. Participant 6 said that occasionally coworkers will mess up on the job, and rather than taking over immediately to get them caught up, the team leader will show patience and allow an opportunity for the coworker to catch up on their own. This helps the coworkers gain confidence in completing each job, and they do not become afraid of occasionally messing up and getting in trouble. Participant 6 also described a pattern of lending an ear to coworkers if they want to vent about a personal or professional issue. The team leader explained that by doing this, it allows for the coworkers to relieve their stress, and production numbers for the entire team tends to increase.

Participant 7

Table 8.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 7

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Reciprocation	Verbal form of appreciation Coworkers help team leader accomplish tasks
Relationship building	Listening to coworkers' personal and professional problems Helping coworkers complete tasks

Themes and Patterns for Participant 7

Theme 1 reciprocation. The first theme that developed from discussions with Participant 7 included reciprocation. The team leader explained that after demonstrating empathy with coworkers, the coworkers would also provide support to the team leader in numerous ways. This became a form of motivation for the team leader to continue to use empathy with coworkers in the future, because the team leader felt appreciated, and did not have to stress as much about completing multiple challenging team leader tasks.

Patterns. Participant 7 mentioned that reciprocation was the most noticeable benefit to using empathy with coworkers. One pattern that described this theme included coworkers offering to help out the team leader with different tasks. One example this included coworkers willing to train new coworkers on the different jobs within the department. Training new coworkers is the responsibility of the team leader, which takes a great deal of time to do, so when coworkers are willing to do this for the team leader, it shows that they appreciate the team leader demonstrating empathy with them. Another pattern that the team leader described was that coworkers will verbally say positive comments to the team leader such as "thank you" and "I will try that out." This shows the team leader that the coworkers do appreciate receiving empathy from the team leader.

Theme 2 relationship building. The second theme described by the team leader involved relationship building with coworkers. The team leader stressed that this is a critical aspect of being a successful team leader because the team leader needs to be in rapport with coworkers in order to get full cooperation from coworkers. The team leader also explained that it makes the team leader job more inviting if you are friends with your entire team. This makes the job easier and makes the shift go by quicker.

Patterns. The second theme described by Participant 7 included developing relationships with coworkers. One pattern to illustrate this theme involved allowing coworkers to vent about personal issues as well as professional issues. When the team leader has developed a strong bond with a coworker, the team leader will offer advice to the coworker. "Majority of the time, the team member will tell me they will try it out or how it worked when they dealt with the situation." This motivates the team leader to continue to demonstrate empathy with coworkers in the future because the team leader acknowledges that it does provide a benefit to the team as a whole, and each individual coworker. The other pattern included being a resource for coworkers. When the team leader can help out coworkers in any way possible, it helps build a form of trust between the team leader and coworkers. The gained trust trickles down throughout the team as a whole as well.

Participant 8

Table 9.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 8

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Recognition	Coworkers having fun together
	Positive body language from coworkers
	Building positive team morale

Themes and Patterns for Participant 8

Theme 1 recognition. The theme that developed from interviewing Participant 8 involved the positive team morale that takes place after the team leader demonstrates

empathy with coworkers. The team leader explained that using empathy with coworkers is an important aspect of conducting the team leader role, because it creates an atmosphere that is enjoyable to work in. When the team members are working together to accomplish organizational goals, it makes the job easier for the team leader, and the coworkers have more fun throughout the shift.

Patterns. Participant 8 explained that the team morale was the most noticeable benefit of using empathy with coworkers. When the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers, the attitudes of the coworkers significantly increased. Examples of this include coworkers laughing and joking with each other throughout the shift, as well as developing not only professional relationships, but lasting friendships outside of the organization. When these behaviors take place, it makes the entire work atmosphere much more enjoyable. The team leader also described a pattern of positive body language from coworkers. "The guys will make eye contact with me, smile, and have positive receptions to what I say." The team leader also mentioned that when he or she interacts with coworkers, it is important to be sensitive to their needs. This allows for the coworkers to gain trust in the team leader, thus increasing the team morale.

Participant 9

Table 10.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 9

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Recognition from coworkers	Verbal form of appreciation Coworkers show respect to team leader
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Listening to coworkers' personal and professional problems Finding ways to connect to coworkers

Themes and Patterns for Participant 9

Theme 1 recognition from coworkers. Participant 9 explained that after demonstrating empathy with coworkers, the coworkers would show recognition towards the team leader. The team leader found this to be motivating and rewarding, and will continue to use empathy with coworkers in the future. The recognition from coworkers shows the team leader that the entire team appreciates the efforts of the team leader. The team leader explained that coworkers would show recognition in multiple forms, including verbal statements of appreciation, as well as physical behaviors, such as completing tasks normally completed by the team leader.

Patterns. Participant 9 described a theme of receiving recognition from coworkers after demonstrating empathy with them. One pattern that alluded to this theme was verbal recognition from coworkers. After the team leader would demonstrate empathy with coworkers, coworkers would say things such as "thank you" or I really

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needed that." These positive gestures from coworkers motivate the team leader to continue to demonstrate with coworkers, as it makes the team leader feel that he or she is making a difference in helping the coworkers. A second pattern included the team leader gaining respect from coworkers. When the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers, the team will reciprocate in some way. Examples included occasionally buying lunch for the team leader or helping the team leader complete different tasks for running the business.

Theme 2 team leader offering supportive behaviors. The second theme that developed from interviewing the team leader included offering supportive behaviors to coworkers. The team leader elaborated that there are times when coworkers fall behind on production goals. When this happens, usually the entire team becomes stressed due to the high-pressure nature of the jobs. The team leader will anticipate the potential anxiety and step in and assist coworkers to help the entire team catch-up on production goals. In doing this, the team leader began to experience value besides completing production goals. The team morale increased and coworkers worked together in a more efficient manner. These benefits motivated the team leader to continue to offer supporting behaviors to coworkers in the future.

Patterns. Participant 9 explained that the most common way of demonstrating empathy with coworkers was by providing support to coworkers in any way possible. One pattern for this theme included the team leader helping coworkers catch up on their jobs. The team leader mentioned that coworkers tend to be stressed when they fall behind on a job, so when the team leader helps them get caught up, the coworkers greatly appreciate it. Another example of helping coworkers included starting up their machines

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at the beginning of the shift. Some of the machines are difficult to start up, which involves extra training in some departments. The team leader will occasionally start up the machines for the coworkers, which saves time and effort for the coworkers. A second pattern involved connecting with coworkers. Examples of this included the team leader listening to personal issues that coworkers may be experiencing, as well as finding ways to relate to coworkers on a personal level. The team leader gave an example of discussing family and kids activities with coworkers.

Participant 10

Table 11.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 10

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Recognition	Coworkers trust each other
	Coworkers help team leader accomplish tasks
	Positive team morale
Using empathy at the right times	Attitudes of coworkers
	Amount of time spent with each coworker
	Builds trust with coworkers

Themes and Patterns for Participant 10

Theme 1 recognition. The first theme that developed from interviewing Participant 10 included the positive team morale. The team leader explained that after demonstrating empathy with coworkers, there is a shift in the energy within the team. The team begins to trust each other and the team leader more, as well as willing to help

each other accomplish organizational tasks. While the trust from coworkers is valued, the team leader explained that when coworkers are willing to help each other complete organizational tasks, it takes pressure off of the team leader and the team as a whole, thus creating a better team morale and work environment.

       Patterns. Participant 10 acknowledged that the biggest benefit of using empathy with coworkers is that the entire team morale increased. One pattern for this theme included the coworkers gaining trust in the team leader and each other. When the team leader demonstrates empathy with a coworker, other coworkers within the team notice that. The entire team gains trust and attitudes begin to increase in positivity. A second pattern mentioned is that the coworkers will reciprocate with the team leader. Examples of this included helping the team leader with tasks such as completing level boards and determining team rotation schedules. This makes the job of the team leader easier, which motivates the team leader demonstrate empathy in the future. The team leader also mentioned that coworkers would verbally acknowledge the team leader by saying "thank you" after receiving empathy from the team leader.

       Theme 2 using empathy at the right times. The second theme that was discussed with Participant 10 included the team leader determining when it was appropriate to use empathy with coworkers. The team leader explained that there are times when coworkers are struggling and they want to be left alone. "Trying to help them out is not going to work." The team leader indicated that it is easy to read the body language of coworkers and identify when they need help and when they want to be left alone. Another factor for determining to use empathy with coworkers included fairness. The team leader cannot continue to help one particular coworker and avoid everyone else

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on the team, or else it may lead to negative responses from the other coworkers. It is important for the team leader to monitor how much time is spent with each coworker in order to avoid a decrease in team morale.

Patterns. Participant 10 explained that there are times to consider when or when not using empathy with coworkers. One pattern for this involved the attitudes of coworkers. The team leader said that if he or she believes that the coworkers are trying to take advantage of the team leader, then the team leader will not demonstrate empathy with that individual. "If they are not giving effort on their job, then I will stay away." The team leader acknowledged that it is difficult to gage this type of perception, however, usually body language and facial expressions give clues to the team leader. The team leader also explained that it is important to not demonstrate empathy with one individual too much. "You have to equally show empathy with everyone or else it seems you are not being fair." Participant 10 said that if he or she spends too much time with one coworker, then it could appear as biased.

Participant 11

Table 12.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 11

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Recognition	Coworkers working together
	Positive team morale
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Fairness to all coworkers
	Finding ways to relate to coworkers

Themes and Patterns for Participant 11

Theme 1 recognition. One theme that developed from interviewing Participant 11 included the morale of the team increasing after the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers. This is rewarding for the team leader because when the team morale increases, production numbers typically increase, and everyone begins to have fun working together. The team leader identified stressful situations as the best time to demonstrate empathy with coworkers. An example of stressful situations would include production goals being increased for the team.

Patterns. Participant 11 explained that the best aspect of using empathy was that the team morale increases after the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers. One pattern that alluded to this theme included the coworkers getting along with each other, the team leader, and the manager. The team leader also acknowledged that after demonstrating empathy, the team production numbers usually increase above normal rates. This also creates a better team and work culture for the coworkers. The attitude of the coworkers also becomes more positive. From time to time, the coworkers are stressed from the nature of the jobs in the department. When the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers, the stress decreases and attitudes become more positive.

Theme 2 team leader offering supportive behaviors. The team leader explained that it is important as a team leader to offer different types of support to coworkers. One interesting factor in offering support to coworkers included that the team leader would only ask coworkers to complete tasks that the team leader would also be willing to complete. The team leader would prove this to coworkers by occasionally completing those types of tasks first, then in the future asking coworkers to complete

them. The team leader explained that by offering support on particularly difficult tasks, it motivates the coworkers to be more willing to complete the tasks on their own.

Patterns. When asked about the way the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers, Participant 11 described two patterns that created this theme. The team leader explained that he or she only asks coworkers to do tasks that the team leader would also do if need be. This shows the entire team that the team leader is not demanding unreal expectations of the coworkers. An example of this included the team leader asking coworkers for help on level boards for the team. This is a task normally completed by the team leader, although, majority of coworkers understand how to complete the level boards as well. The second pattern included the team leader connecting with coworkers on a personal level. One example of the team leader doing this was by spending time with coworkers outside of the organization. Going out to dinner, or participating in sports activities with coworkers helps the team leader connect with the coworkers on a personal level.

Participant 12

Table 13.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 12

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Connecting with coworkers	Team leader provides emotional and physical support Increasing team morale

Themes and Patterns for Participant 12

  Theme 1 connecting with coworkers. Participant 12 explained that this team experiences low team morale on a regular basis due to the manager conducting what the team leader described as "micromanagement." The team leader gave examples of micromanagement as the manager dictating what tasks the coworkers complete, what order to complete them, and what time to complete them by. The team leader explained that this type of management decreases the team morale significantly on a daily basis. The team leader spends the majority of each shift finding ways to connect with coworkers as an attempt to increase the team morale.

  Patterns. One way that the team leader does this is by sharing frustrations with coworkers about the team dynamic in their department. The team leader described this as providing "emotional and physical support." When asked about types of physical support demonstrate empathy, the team leader stated "I will take certain jobs that the team would normally do so that they can take a break from the stress." Participant 12 mentioned that usually this helps increase team morale by the end of the shift; however, the next day usually starts off low again.

Participant 13

Table 14.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 13

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Recognition	Coworkers work together Coworkers feel free to speak their minds
Connecting with coworkers	Sharing personal and professional issues with coworkers

Themes and Patterns for Participant 13

 Theme 1 recognition. Participant 13 described a theme that focused on the team morale as a whole. One aspect that the team leader originally noticed after demonstrating empathy with coworkers is that the entire team not only increased in morale, but also became comfortable sharing their opinions about business decisions within the team. This adds a great deal of value for the team leader because the team leader does not have to worry about guessing the attitudes of coworkers, as they are willing to share what they are feeling and thinking.

 Patterns. Participant 13 explained that the most noticeable aspect of using empathy with coworkers is that the team morale increases significantly. When coworkers receive empathy from the team leader, the coworkers would increase their effort level in regards to completing job tasks. To go along with this pattern, the team leader mentioned that coworkers also would cooperate better with other coworkers after receiving empathy

from the team leader. This motivates the team leader to use empathy in the future with coworkers. A second pattern is that coworkers feel like they can speak their mind and not only will the team leader listen, but the coworkers will listen as well. This creates a positive work culture for the entire team.

Theme 2 connecting with coworkers. The team leader mentioned that it is critical for the team leader to find ways to connect with coworkers so that when the team leader demonstrates empathy, it comes across as genuine. The best way for the team leader to connect with coworkers is by talking about personal issues, such as family and kids. This shows coworkers that the team leader cares about them as a person, and not just another employee. The team leader also acknowledged that when empathy is demonstrated, production from the team increases. "A happy person is more productive and thorough." This makes the job of team leader easier to fulfill when the team is producing at a high rate.

Patterns. Participant 13 explained that along with team moral, connecting with coworkers is just as important. One pattern that supported the team leader connecting with coworkers included sharing personal information with coworkers. The team leader identified the fact that there has to be trust developed with coworkers before sharing personal information, but after the trust is developed, the sharing aspect helps the entire team bond.

Participant 14

Table 15.

The Themes and Patterns for Participant 14

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Using empathy at the right times	Observing body language and attitude of coworkers
Recognition	Listening to coworkers' personal and professional problems Coworkers help each other complete tasks

Themes and Patterns for Participant 14

Theme 1 using empathy at the right times. Participant 14 is in a department where the aspect of running the business takes a lot of time for the team leader to complete tasks that are the responsibility of the team leader. Due to the nature of this job in this particular department, the team leader explained that it is important to determine when demonstrating empathy with coworkers is really needed. When asked how to determine when to demonstrate empathy, the team leader explained that the attitude of the coworker is the most telling factor. "If they are doing their job or not trying their best, I will not help out." The team leader also mentioned that the body language and facial expressions of coworkers is the easiest way to identify the current attitude of the coworker.

Patterns. One pattern that the team leader mentioned multiple times involved reading the body language and attitudes of coworkers to determine if it was appropriate to demonstrate empathy. The team leader explained that the department is extremely busy in comparison to other departments, so the team leader does not have much time to spend with coworkers. If the team leader is going to demonstrate empathy with a coworker, the coworker should not display a negative attitude or a lack of care for completing the job. If the team leader perceives a coworker to have a negative attitude, then the coworker will not receive empathy from the team leader.

Theme 2 recognition. Participant 14 acknowledged that when the team leader does demonstrate empathy with coworkers, it unites the team as a whole. Coworkers will work together to troubleshoot problems, make decisions on rotation schedule and breaks, and help catch each other up on particular jobs. The team leader explained that this also reduces the amount of stress that coworkers' experience. "I will sometimes just listen and let them vent." In doing this, the coworkers relieve stress and gain trust in the team leader.

Patterns. Participant 14 described a theme of the team morale increasing after the team leader demonstrates empathy with coworkers. One pattern that helped develop this theme included the interactions between coworkers. Coworkers are more willing to help each other accomplish organizational goals and particularly difficult tasks. The team as a whole will also make decisions together, including rotation schedule and bathroom breaks. The second pattern included the entire team willing to help each other on the jobs within the department. There are some jobs within this department that are tougher than others, so the coworkers will help each other as needed.

Themes

Table 16.

Composite Themes and Patterns that Represent All of the Participants

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Reciprocation	Verbal form of appreciation
	Coworkers help team leader accomplish tasks
Team leader offering supportive behaviors	Listening to coworkers' personal and professional problems
	Helping coworkers' complete tasks
	Finding ways to relate to coworkers
	Offering advice to coworkers when needed
	Team leader making decisions in best interest of coworkers
	Providing relief on the jobs for coworkers
	Being patient with coworkers on the jobs
	Fairness to all coworkers
Recognizing coworkers	Relationship building
	Better work culture
	Teamwork
	Team bonding
Provides emotional and physical support	Increases team morale

Table 16 continued.

Composite Themes and Patterns that Represent All of the Participants

Themes	Patterns that support the theme
Relationship building	Gaining respect from coworkers
	Offering advice
	Building trust with coworkers
	Listening to coworkers' personal and professional problems
	Helping coworkers complete tasks
	Increased morale of coworkers
Getting team members involved in the business	Entire team making decisions together
	Team leader allowing time for coworkers to find solutions on their own
	Positive team morale
	Attitudes of coworkers
	Coworkers trust each other
	Positive body language from coworkers
	Coworkers having fun together
	Coworkers receiving recognition
	Coworkers feel free to speak their minds
Recognition	Verbal form of appreciation
	Coworkers help team leader accomplish tasks

From interviewing team leaders about how they use empathy with coworkers and the factors they consider when determining to use empathy or not, there are numerous themes that lead to lessons learned from the study. One lesson learned is that when team leaders receive empathy from their supervisor, it becomes influential for them to use empathy with their coworkers. This is the starting point for creating a positive work environment. A second lesson learned is that team leaders view the attitude of the coworker as a major factor in deciding to use empathy or not. The third lesson learned is that team leaders have multiple benefits from using empathy with coworkers, such as reciprocation, gratitude, and an increase in employee morale. This shows that team leaders should want to use empathy with coworkers in order to make the job easier for them and their team of coworkers. The last lesson learned is that when team leaders use empathy, it has a positive impact on the entire team. Teams enjoy working together and building rapport with each other when the team leader demonstrates empathy. This is consistent with Lehmann-Willenbrock and Allen (2014) and their study with organizational teams and humor. The findings from their study showed that particular behaviors from leaders such as humor, in a team setting, might have a positive influence on team interactions and team performance (Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2014). The aspect of team interactions in that study is similar to the characteristic of rapport building in the current study. When leaders find ways to interact with teams of coworkers, it might have a positive influence on the interactions between coworkers.

Summary

After interviewing 14 participants and asking questions about the use of empathy, the results showed that team leaders gain numerous benefits from using empathy with coworkers, such as reciprocation, gratitude, and increase in employee morale. The attitude of the coworker is the primary factor for team leaders when determining whether or not they use empathy with coworkers. When team leaders receive empathy from their supervisor, it plays an important role in how they interact with their coworkers. Lastly, the use of empathy from team leaders helps create an atmosphere where the team enjoys working with each other and finds numerous ways to build rapport together. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the results from the study and posit conclusions, as well as providing grounded recommendations for both future research and for how team leaders might use empathy when leading teams of coworkers.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the results, as well as an interpretation of what the results indicate, conclusions from the study, the limitations of the study, and future recommendations for research and intervention focusing on team leaders and the use of empathy. This chapter is critical for the concept of team leaders and the use of empathy, as the results add value to the research topic, and further recommendations may open up more findings to the use of empathy from the team leader role.

Summary of Results

In organizations that use the team concept, the role of the team leader involves multiple challenges in regard to running the team from the business perspective, but just as importantly, providing support to coworkers as needed. These challenges cause a disparity in teams based upon the morale of coworkers and the efficiency of teams completing organizational goals. Previous research (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996) has shown that leaders who use empathy with employees experience positive results in terms of morale and production goals being completed but the research did not explain how leaders use empathy with employees. The purpose of this study was to investigate how team leaders use empathy in leading their teams of coworkers.

The study involved using a qualitative case study methodology, conducting structured interviews with 14 participants who were team leaders within an automotive factory in the United States. The results indicated themes of behaviors that team leaders attribute to the use of empathy with their coworkers. Team leaders use the attitude of the coworker to help determine if they will use empathy with that particular employee. If the

employee is putting forth effort in completing his or her job, but is struggling to complete the job, the team leader tends to use empathy as a tool to help that employee complete their job. If the coworker is perceived to be "slacking off" then the team leader will not provide support for that employee.

When team leaders use empathy with their coworkers, the coworkers will reciprocate in some manner to show appreciation to the team leader. This is similar to the findings from Cotterell, Eisenberger, and Speicher (1992) in that when leaders demonstrate behaviors that are viewed as positive, such as humor, it has a positive influence in team dynamics such as communication and cooperation (Cotterell, Eisenberger, & Speicher, 1992). This has a positive impact on the team as a whole, as the culture of the team tends to improve. When team leaders use empathy with their teams of coworkers, the coworkers give verbal gratitude towards the team leader as well by saying "thank you." These gestures of gratitude toward the team leaders encourage the team leaders to keep using empathy as a tool in leading their teams of coworkers. The last significant result from the study shows that when team leaders receive empathy from their supervisor, it tends to influence them to use empathy with their own teams of coworkers. This finding strengthens the findings by Lilius et al. (2008) in that when employees receive empathy from others, it leaves a longer positive impression on the employees, thus improving their attitude in the workplace.

Analysis of Results

After analyzing the data from interviews with team leaders and the use of empathy, there were findings that were repetitive themes reported by team leaders. These themes are particular behaviors that team leaders and coworkers share within the team

environment. One common theme was that the team leaders decide whether or not to use empathy with a coworker based upon the perceived attitude of the coworker. This is an important aspect of the relationship between the team leader and the coworkers on the team because this is a behavior perceived by the team leader. This finding relates to the research conducted by Moon et al. (2014) that showed that employees' attitudes are impacted positively or negatively by their perceptions of leaders. This theme also supports the findings from Shoss et al. (2013), if the employee perceives the relationship as positive, then the employee is willing to develop knowledge and skills, increasing performance and productivity. It is important for the team leaders to be aware of their coworkers' perceptions as that may alter their attitude in the team environment.

A second finding that resulted in a behavioral pattern involves the response from coworkers after receiving some form of empathy from the team leader. The data showed that team leaders receive verbal gratitude from coworkers after demonstrating empathy with them. In addition to verbal gratitude, coworkers would also reciprocate helping gestures or behaviors toward the team leader. This has numerous positive implications, as it motivates the team leader to want to use empathy more with coworkers, as well as create a positive atmosphere for the work environment, and increase team morale. This finding strengthens the research conducted by Moon et al. (2016) in that when employees receive empathy from others, it increases employee outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors and organizational commitment. Blau (1964) explained that when employees within an organization demonstrate reciprocation to another party, it helps build trust between the two parties. This research from Blau (1964) has been illustrated in the current study, as team leaders explained that when they demonstrate empathy with

coworkers, the coworkers reciprocate with team leaders by verbally saying thank you, or helping the team leader with work-related tasks. This theme supports previous findings from Zhang and Peterson (2011) in that the transformational leadership style increases team performance. It also supports Kaslow et al. (2012) in that feedback should be provided to employees on a consistent basis and delivered in a manner that is perceived as meaningful from the employee. With these behaviors taking place within the team setting, it not only creates a positive atmosphere, but also builds trust between the team leader and the coworkers.

The third finding focused on the team leader receiving empathy from their supervisor. When the supervisor demonstrated empathy with the team leader, the team leader would demonstrate empathy with their coworkers. This has a "trickle" effect on the team as a whole, starting with the supervisor. A study conducted by Dietz and Kleinlogel (2014) investigated the impact that managers had using empathy with employees after the employees received wage cuts. Their findings showed that the use of empathy from managers had the potential to help employees in difficult situations. The study also found that the use of empathy from managers had a positive influence on stakeholders involved in the difficult situations (Dietz & Kleinlogel, 2014). The findings from Dietz and Kleinlogel (2014) are similar to the present study involving supervisors and team leaders. When the team leaders receive empathy from their supervisor, it has a positive influence on them as a stakeholder in the business. In turn, the team leaders are more willing to use empathy with their coworkers, which influences the coworker and the team as a whole in a positive manner. This theme also supports the findings from Wang and Howell (2010) in that transformational leaders should use different methods for

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motivating individuals in comparison to motivating teams of employees. In addition, this finding supports previous research explaining that when transformational leaders demonstrate empathy with employees, it also involves deep acting (Humphrey, Pollack, & Hawver, 2008), or getting truly involved with the employee, which helps increase authenticity (Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt, 2009). The theme of the team leader receiving empathy from their supervisor supports Sosik and Cameron (2010) in that transformational leaders have the capability to shape the culture of a work environment by leading by example and modeling good behaviors in different areas such as emotions, behavior, and reactions to feedback.

Limitations

In the research study, there were limitations that may have had in impact on the results found. One limitation was that the interviews took place at different times throughout one day. A study conducted by Danziger, Levav, and Avnaim-Pesso (2011) found that judicial decisions in the court system decrease significantly towards the end of the day (Danziger, Levav, & Avnaim-Pesso, 2011). The reason for this is that judges were too tired at the end of the day to make more decisions (Danziger et al., 2011). These findings are similar to the limitation in the current study involving the time of interviews with participants. The interviews took place during each participant's regular shift hours; each participant conducted the interview at different times throughout their shift. For example, one participant may have started his or her shift for three hours and then conducted the interview. Another participant may have started his or her shift by conducting the interview, while others may have completed the interview at the end of their shift. Depending on when the participants conducted the interviews, their emotions

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could have played a role in their responses to questions. Nozaki (2015) explained that emotional competence includes the ability to use the concept of trait in regards to emotions. This refers to how people behave in particular ways during emotional situations (Nozaki, 2015). Nozaki explained that people in general might have a difficult time behaving particular ways depending on the strength of the emotion. As an example, it is possible that a participant could have gotten in to an argument with a coworker, and then came in for the interview and had a different frame of mind then normal due to particular circumstances for that day.

A second limitation to the study included potential stress during the day of interviews. Kahn and Byosiere (1993) explained that stressors might impact the responses of a person psychologically, physiologically, or behaviorally. If team leaders were concerned or stressed about work, then the responses to questions may have been biased or not fully thought out. For future research, it would be helpful to conduct data collection on a day where work stressors are at a minimum, so that participants can fully focus on the questions being asked.

Recommendations

An important aspect of conducting research is analyzing the results, but it is also just as critical to understand how the results may play a role in the future. This study, involving team leaders and the use of empathy with their coworkers, illustrated potential for future recommendations involving the two constructs of empathy and leadership. Future studies may open more possibilities with the use of empathy within the team environment, involving team leaders, supervisors, and coworkers. In addition to future recommendations, there are recommendations for intervention to be investigated as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

One recommendation for future research includes investigating a possible correlation between team leaders receiving empathy, and team leaders using empathy with coworkers. Team leaders who explained that they receive empathy from their supervisor also explained that it became influential for them to use empathy with their teams of coworkers. Participants who did not receive empathy from their supervisor did not typically use empathy with their coworkers. Future research could investigate this phenomenon in more detail to find out if there is a correlation between receiving and demonstrating empathy. Previous research from Byrne and Hochwarter (2006) explained that when employees believed they were receiving support from leaders, the level of performance from employees increased. Byrne and Hochwarter also noted that when employees believed that they were not receiving support from leaders, performance levels from employees decreased. That research could be applied to team leaders receiving empathy from supervisors and how they perform with their responsibilities as a team leader.

A second recommendation for future research involves the amount of times each team leaders demonstrates empathy with coworkers based upon each behavior. Team leaders gave examples of how they demonstrate empathy with coworkers on a daily basis, which helps understand how empathy is used. An unknown at this time is how often team leaders are demonstrating each particular behavior, and the short-term benefits for every time the behaviors are demonstrated. This type of research study could potentially quantify how often empathy should be used from a team leader perspective.

Recommendations for Intervention

One recommendation is to investigate the production numbers of teams and comparing the numbers to the amount of empathy used by team leaders. One of the original problems included a disparity in teams based upon morale and efficiency in completing organizational goals (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2006). It is possible that teams with team leaders who demonstrate empathy have more efficient production numbers versus teams where the team leader does not use empathy. Monden (1994) explained that manufacturing organizations began using lean production in order to make teams and processes lean and as efficient as possible, eliminating roles and materials that were considered unnecessary (Monden, 1994). The exploration of use of empathy from team leaders with coworkers, compared with production numbers of teams would have high interest from a top leadership perspective in manufacturing organizations, as the ideal goal would be to have all teams with high efficiency rates for production numbers, using the lean production method. With a disparity in teams, empathy from team leaders may play a role in production efficiency.

Conclusion

This research study examined how team leaders within an automotive factory use empathy in leading their teams of coworkers. After interviewing 14 team leaders, results showed that team leaders use multiple behaviors on a daily basis that demonstrate empathy with coworkers. These behaviors also provide additional benefits for the team leaders, coworkers, and teams as a whole, including higher team morale, higher employee morale, and reciprocation between team leaders and coworkers. It was found that team leaders ultimately use the attitudes of coworkers to determine whether they will use

empathy with coworkers. Team leaders who receive empathy from their supervisor become influenced in using empathy with their own teams of coworkers. These results show that empathy has benefits for team leaders, teams, and the organization as a whole, as the culture and work environment have employees with high morale. With an understanding of how team leaders use empathy with their teams of coworkers, including particular behaviors demonstrated, it is possible that organizations in the future could provide training to team leaders to show how to use empathy in particular situations with coworkers. With numerous benefits to stakeholders when team leaders use empathy, it would seem appropriate that organizations would desire every team leader to use empathy as a tool in their leadership toolbox with their teams of coworkers.

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