



THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPATHIC LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SATISFACTION

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between empathetic leadership and employees' life satisfaction. The study sample consists of 382 white-collar workers based in Istanbul, employed in office-based roles across human resources, procurement, public relations, finance, and accounting departments of private enterprises. The average age of participants is 36 years. Data were collected using a demographic information form and three different self-report scales. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and Bootstrap Analysis were employed for data analysis to determine relationships between variables. Hayes' Process Macro was used for mediation analysis. According to the results of the research, it is understood that empathetic leadership has an effect on employee life satisfaction and job satisfaction has a mediating role in this effect.

Keywords: *Empathetic Leadership, Life Satisfaction, Employee Well-being, Job Satisfaction*

JEL Classification: *M10, M12, M50, M54*

EMPATİK LİDERLİK VE YAŞAM DOYUMU ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİDE İŞ TATMİNİNİN ARACILIK ROLÜ

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı empatik liderliğin çalışanın yaşam doyumuna etkisinde iş doyumunun aracı rolünün incelenmesidir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu İstanbul'da yaşayan ve özel işletmelerin insan kaynakları, satın alma, halkla ilişkiler, finans, muhasebe birimlerinde ofis temelli çalışan bulunan 382 beyaz yakalı çalışandan oluşmaktadır. Katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 36'dır. Araştırmada veriler, demografik bilgi formu ve üç farklı öz-bildirim ölçeği kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde betimsel istatistiklerin yanı sıra değişkenler arasındaki ilişkinin saptanması için Pearson Korelasyon Katsayısı ve Bootstrap Analizi kullanılmıştır. Aracılık analizinde Hayes'in Process Makrosundan faydalanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre çalışanın yaşam doyumunda empatik liderliğin etkisinin olduğu ve bu etkiye iş tatmininin aracı role sahip olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Empatik Liderlik, Yaşam Doyumu, Çalışan İyi-oluşu, İş Tatmini*

JEL Sınıflandırması: *M10, M12, M50, M54*

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1. Introduction

The happiness of employees has become an increasingly prominent topic among researchers in recent years. This attention has not only aimed at fostering happier and more productive employees (Wright and Staw, 1999) but also at mitigating the negative effects of workplace stress. These negative effects include psychological issues such as disappointment, depression, and anxiety, as well as various physical problems like heart conditions and hypertension (Siu et al., 2007). Some studies have indicated that employees may be willing to forgo salary increments for the sake of being healthy and happy (Warr, 1999). The happiness of employees who spend the majority of their daily time in office environments with managers and coworkers can be cultivated from both physical and psychological aspects of the work environment (Gilbreath and Benson, 2004). Particularly, managers assuming supervisory roles have significant influence over job demands, control, and social support, thereby exerting substantial positive or negative impacts on employees' work lives (Gilbreath and Benson, 2004; Harris and Kacmar, 2006).

Managers should be aware of not only planning, coordinating, and controlling mechanisms within their organizations, but also the positive or negative emotions of their employees. This awareness is crucial because employees, as social beings, fulfill roles outside of work as citizens, friends, neighbors, parents, and more, each of which imposes distinct responsibilities and shapes the spectrum of emotions they experience throughout life. Work life significantly contributes to this broad spectrum of emotions. It cannot be said that a purely performance- and output-oriented perspective is a humane approach, as managers need to consider the general challenges and conditions of life that their employees face. Effective leadership has thus become an important factor not only in managing tasks but also in enhancing employees' emotional well-being and motivation. The ability of managers to observe, perceive, and show understanding of the current emotional state of employees is related to empathy. Managers with high empathy skills understand the importance of building trust with employees, encourage their efforts, demonstrate sensitivity to job satisfaction, and support their professional development (Mayfield and Mayfield, 2015). By behaving empathetically, managers can improve the emotional states of employees and make them feel valued for their emotions. Therefore, a manager's high empathy skills can contribute to both attitudes toward work and overall employee happiness.

Kock et al. (2019) introduced the concept of empathetic leadership, which emphasizes managers' ability to understand, appreciate, and support the emotional states of their employees. Their research found that empathetic leadership enhances job satisfaction and promotes innovative work behaviors, thereby increasing employee performance. It was noted, however, that empathetic leadership may weaken in work environments or remote settings where face-to-face interactions with colleagues and managers are less frequent (Kock et al., 2019). Therefore, perceptions of empathetic leadership are particularly notable among office workers who perform their duties from the office during regular working hours and have frequent face-to-face interactions with colleagues and supervisors. Apart from Tortumlu's study (2023) in the Turkish literature on empathetic leadership, no other research has been identified. Indeed, there is a need for more comprehensive studies on this topic in the field of leadership literature in Turkish culture.

This study aims to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between employees' perceptions of empathetic leadership and their life satisfaction among office personnel in administrative departments of private enterprises.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Relationship Between Empathetic Leadership and Life Satisfaction

Employee happiness is a complex and broad topic. In its most general sense, happiness is defined as the state of feeling good about one's emotions (Warr, 2006), whereas in a narrower context, it is defined as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences' (Locke, 1976). There is no single universal definition of happiness.

Some studies approach happiness within the context of positive psychology (Ryff, 1989; Stewart et al., 1988; Veit and Ware, 1983), while others define it in terms of an individual's physical, mental, social, and environmental conditions (Kiefer, 2008, p. 244).

A review of the literature reveals that topics related to employee happiness are discussed within the frameworks of subjective well-being (Russell, 2008), psychological well-being (Zapf, 2002), and life satisfaction (Rice, Near, and Hunt, 1980). Happiness is characterized by an individual's positive emotions outweighing negative ones and experiencing satisfaction with life (Busseri and Sadava, 2011; Diener et al., 1985; Jovanovic, 2011). Similarly, Cummins et al. (2002) argue that happiness consists of evaluations of positive and negative emotions, as well as assessments of satisfaction with life. Given that definitions by Busseri and Sadava (2011), Diener et al. (1985), Jovanovic (2011), and Cummins et al. (2002) consider life satisfaction as part of happiness, measures of life satisfaction can be utilized in assessments of happiness.

Decreased happiness and increased stress among employees can lead to reduced performance, higher absenteeism rates, undesirable turnover levels, as well as issues such as apathy, alcoholism, and decreased commitment (Shirom, 1989). Several factors influence the happiness levels of employees in the workplace, one of which is managers. Poor manager-employee relationships characterized by low managerial support, poor communication quality, and lack of feedback diminish happiness and contribute to increased stress (Cartwright and Cooper, 1994). Therefore, the role of manager behavior is significant in employee happiness (Offermann and Hellmann, 1996; Van Dierendonck et al., 2004; Inceoglu et al., 2018).

Managers play a crucial role in fostering positive emotions in individuals' work experiences. Numerous studies have identified that manager behaviors impact employee happiness. Research indicates that charismatic leadership (Bono and Ilies, 2006, p. 331), transformational leadership (Sharifirad, 2013; Arnold, 2017), ethical leadership (Kalshoven and Boon, 2012), and servant leadership (Giolito and Dierendonck, 2015) are significant factors in employee happiness. Recently, empathetic leadership, defined as a manager's ability to understand and be compassionate toward employees' feelings without any self-interest, has also been shown to have a positive impact on employee emotions and attitudes (Kock et al., 2019). Empathetic leadership shares similarities with servant leadership, as both emphasize prioritizing employee needs. Servant leadership, in particular, signifies a manager's prioritization of employee needs (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2017; Russell and Stone, 2002).

The Theory of Initiating Structure and Consideration (Judge et al., 2004; Weissenberg and Kavanagh, 1972; Kavanagh, 1972) posits that the extent to which a manager values the well-being, needs, and emotions of employees facilitates the development of interpersonal relationships, trust, and mutual respect. The theory suggests that understanding employees' concerns and demonstrating support is a significant attitude for enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, and happiness. Empathy has been found to have significant positive effects at the levels of leaders, followers, and organizations (Zivkovic, 2022). Leaders who are emotionally effective tend to be more successful (Groves, 2006). A leader's compassion, honesty, sensitivity, and empathy towards employees positively influence both employee well-being and organizational performance (Raina, 2022). During organizational crises, employees often experience intense emotions such as anxiety, panic, and distress (James et al., 2011; Kayes, 2004). Leaders with higher levels of empathy are better equipped to manage individuals undergoing these emotional experiences (Kahn et al., 2013; Vuori & Huy, 2016). Demonstrations of warmth and interest by leaders towards employees are likely to enhance employees' positive emotions (Gable et al., 2004) and can mitigate the effects of negative emotions; for instance, receiving sympathy during challenging times can help reduce feelings of demoralization (O'Brien et al., 2009).

Research by Scott et al. (2010) indicates that employee groups with empathetic managers report lower levels of somatic complaints, suggesting a direct relationship between managerial empathy and employees' physical health. Further studies demonstrate that when managers create

an environment where employees feel supported and valued, employee well-being is positively affected (Arghode et al., 2022). In their longitudinal design research, Van Dierendonck et al. (2004) found that manager behavior influences the level of happiness among employees.

Empathy plays a significant role in emotional and social interactions by preventing aggressive behaviors and fostering understanding and collaboration among individuals (Bošnjaković and Radionov, 2018: 123). Empathetic leadership involves a manager understanding their employees' emotions and providing emotional support. When employees feel understood by their manager, it can enhance their well-being. Employees who perceive that their feelings, needs, and expectations are valued apart from their job tend to have higher happiness levels in their work life. Empathetic leadership entails managers genuinely showing that they care about their employees. Building upon these theories and findings, Hypothesis 1 is formulated:

H1: Empathetic leadership positively affects life satisfaction.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Being an emotional being, humans require understanding and emotional support in all aspects of life. In the workplace, individuals expect this support from their colleagues or managers. Particularly, managers play a crucial role in providing emotional support by empathizing with their employees (Cornelis et al., 2013). The emotional support offered by managers fosters the formation of sincere bonds. By establishing these emotional connections, managers help improve employees' emotional states and positive feelings toward the workplace (Long and Schultz, 1973; M. Mayfield and Mayfield, 2009). Through empathetic behaviors, managers enhance employees' emotional well-being and convey that their feelings are valued. Empathetic leadership signifies a manager's concern for employees as individuals, not just as part of an organization, by establishing an emotional connection with them (Grant, 2013; J. Mayfield and Mayfield, 2009).

Research indicates that the social support and positive feedback provided by managers significantly explain job satisfaction (Winkler et al., 2015). Another study by Bono et al. (2007) found that manager's emotional support enhances leader-member interactions, leading to positive effects on job satisfaction and job stress. Kock et al. (2019) identified empathetic leadership as a significant predictor of employee job satisfaction. Another research underscored the positive relationship between empathetic leadership and job satisfaction (Negoro and Wibowo, 2021).

The manner in which a manager expresses emotional support enhances job satisfaction (Madlock, 2008). Perceiving that one's emotions are valued can increase the belief that other interests will also be protected (Axelrod, 2009; Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Thomas, Zolin, and Hartman, 2009), thereby fostering a sense of trust. Employees' trust in their managers is a significant factor in reducing job stress and increasing job satisfaction (Gilstrap and Collins, 2012; Reisel et al., 2007). Providing emotional support enhances employees' trust in managers. Managers demonstrating understanding of employees' emotions, awareness of their personal or social issues, consideration of their feelings, support in coping with challenges, and being emotionally present contribute to employees feeling more satisfied in their jobs (J. Mayfield and Mayfield, 2017a; M. Mayfield and Mayfield, 2017b).

Happiness, although a general emotional state encompassing one's overall life, significantly influences an individual's life, especially in the context of work. Therefore, it is plausible to say that experiences in different life domains influence each other. Indeed, the Spillover Hypothesis suggests that experiences in one domain of life have mutual effects on experiences in other domains (Judge et al., 2001; Rain, Lane, and Steiner, 1991; Rice, Near, and Hunt, 1980). For instance, positive or negative experiences at work can contribute to satisfaction in other social domains (such as marriage, friendships, leisure activities, etc.).

Academic research over the years has extensively examined the relationship between job satisfaction and happiness (Bowling, Eschleman, and Wang, 2010). Longitudinal and cross-sectional

studies have demonstrated a reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and happiness (Judge, Boudreau, and Bretz, 1994; Judge and Watanabe, 1993; Keon and McDonald, 1982; Schmitt and Bedeian, 1982; Bialowolski & Weziak-Bialowolska, 2022; Kosec et al., 2022; Judge & Watanabe, 1993). In light of all these theories and research findings, it is considered that empathetic leadership could potentially act as a mediator in the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Understanding and showing empathy towards employees' emotions and current situations can enhance job satisfaction, thereby positively contributing to overall life satisfaction. Based on these explanations, Hypothesis H2 is formulated:

H2: Job satisfaction has a mediating role in the effect of empathetic leadership on life satisfaction.

3. Methodology

In the study, the mediating role of job satisfaction in the effect of empathetic leadership on employees' life satisfaction was tested using the relational survey model. Relational survey model is within the scope of quantitative research tradition. This model is a type of research model that aims to determine whether there is a change between more than one variable and the extent of this change (Karasar, 2012). The research model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model



3.1. The Study Sample

The study sample consists of 382 white-collar employees working in administrative units of private businesses in Istanbul, such as human resources, procurement, public relations, finance, and accounting. Among the participants, 28.5% (n=109) are female, and 71.5% (n=273) are male. The average age of the participants is 36 years. Regarding marital status, 34% are single, and 66% are married. In terms of educational background, 23% (n=88) of the participants have completed high school, 50% (n=188) have a bachelor's degree, 26% (n=100) have a master's degree, and 1% (n=6) have a doctoral degree. The study sample was selected using convenience sampling, which involves the researchers selecting the most accessible respondents to reach the required sample size (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016).

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

In this study, data were collected using the Empathetic Leadership Scale, Job Satisfaction Scale, and Life Satisfaction Scale to measure empathy, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction, respectively.

Empathetic Leadership Scale (ELS): The Empathetic Leadership Scale, derived from the empathetic section of the Motivating Language Scale using five items on a 7-point Likert scale, was developed by Mayfield and Mayfield (2015). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was initially conducted by Tortumlu (2023), who reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .94, indicating strong internal consistency. Additionally, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

demonstrated excellent fit indices for scale validity (Tortumlu, 2023). In the current study, the scale exhibited a Cronbach's alpha of .92, and CFA results showed goodness-of-fit indices: RMSEA=0.068, NFI=0.98, CFI=0.98, IFI=0.97, RFI=0.97, GFI=0.98, and AGFI=0.94, confirming its validity.

Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS): The Life Satisfaction Scale, used to measure participants' happiness, was adapted into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016). This 5-item scale employs a 5-point Likert format and has been validated as reliable and valid through a single-factor structure in previous Turkish adaptation studies. The current study used CFA to validate the scale, yielding a chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 1.201$) and fit indices: IFI = .99, TLI = .99, CFI = .99, SRMR = .018, RMSEA = .026. Additionally, the scale demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87.

Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS): Developed by Brayfield and Rothe (1951) to assess job satisfaction levels among employees, this scale has undergone adaptations over time. Judge et al. (1998) introduced a short version with 5 items, including 2 reversed items, and reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 for the short form. The Turkish translation of the scale was conducted by Keser and Öngen Bilir (2019), maintaining a 5-point Likert scale format. The scale includes statements such as "I am currently very satisfied with my job" and "I find my job enjoyable."

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in this study yielded fit indices: chi-square (χ^2 / df) = 2.62, RMSEA = 0.078, RMR = 0.038, NFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.97, IFI = 0.96, RFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.96, and AGFI = 0.95, indicating excellent fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Reliability analysis for the scale showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .83, indicating good internal consistency.

3.3. Data Analysis

The research data were collected using an online Google Forms survey, ensuring that data fell within expected ranges and no missing data were identified. The analysis of data obtained through measurement tools designed for the study's purpose was conducted using the computer-based SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 21.0 software packages. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the scales used in the study was performed using AMOS 21.0, while reliability analysis of the scales was conducted using SPSS 22.0.

The mediating model constructed within the research framework was tested using the Process macro developed by Andrew Hayes within the SPSS program. The Process macro is capable of evaluating complex models, providing statistical assessments that go beyond mere p-values by also calculating confidence intervals using the bootstrap method, which does not require the assumption of normal distribution. The statistical significance of indirect effects is considered when the confidence interval (BootLLCI and BootULCI) does not include zero. In this study, Model 4 as outlined by Hayes (2013) was employed, where empathetic leadership served as the independent variable, employee happiness as the dependent variable, and job satisfaction as the mediating variable.

3.4. Findings

Descriptive statistics of the research variables were computed, and the resulting values are presented in Table 1. Additionally, Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between the variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Values, and Correlation Values for Research Variables

Variables	Ort.	SS	Skewness	Kurtosis	1.	2.	3.
1. EL	4,87	1,63	-,815	-,012	(0,92)		
2. JS	3,57	0,79	-,618	,193	,532**	(0,83)	
3. LS	3,04	0,83	-,028	-,254	,175**	,288**	(0,87)

Upon examining Table 1, it was found that participants had a mean score of 4.87 (SD = 1.63) for empathetic leadership. Considering the maximum score that can be obtained from this scale is 7, it can be observed that participants in the sample exhibited a relatively high level of empathetic

leadership. Furthermore, the arithmetic mean of job satisfaction among participants was 3.57 (SD = 0.79). Given that the maximum score for job satisfaction is 5, this indicates an above-average level of job satisfaction among the participants. Lastly, participants' level of life satisfaction was determined to have a mean value of 3.04 (SD = 0.83). The normality of the data was confirmed by examining skewness and kurtosis coefficients, which ranged between +1 and -1.

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to calculate the relationships between variables. According to the analysis results presented in Table 1, there were positive and significant relationships among all variables studied. Specifically, empathetic leadership was found to have a significant relationship with job satisfaction ($r = 0.53$; $p < 0.01$) and life satisfaction ($r = 0.29$; $p < 0.01$). Additionally, a significant relationship was observed between job satisfaction and life satisfaction ($r = 0.17$; $p < 0.01$).

To test whether job satisfaction mediates the relationship between empathetic leadership and life satisfaction, an mediation analysis was conducted using the Process macro developed by Hayes (2018). In this context, regression analysis based on the bootstrap method was performed. Many researchers argue that the bootstrap method provides more reliable results compared to Baron and Kenny's (1986) Sobel test (Zhao et al., 2010; Preacher et al., 2011; Hayes, 2018). The "bootstrap resampling" option was selected for the analyses. In bootstrap analyses, for mediation hypotheses to be supported, the 95% confidence interval (CI) values should not include zero (MacKinnon et al., 2004). Furthermore, the level of mediation role was evaluated by examining the completely standardized effect (K^2) value. A K^2 value close to 0.01 indicates a low effect, around 0.09 indicates a moderate effect, and close to 0.25 indicates a high effect (Preacher et al., 2011).

The primary focus of mediation analysis using the Process macro is to calculate indirect and direct effect values and draw conclusions based on these values. Indirect effect is defined as the product of the effect of the independent variable (empathetic leadership) on the mediator variable (job satisfaction) and the effect of the mediator variable on the dependent variable (life satisfaction). If the indirect effect of the independent variable (empathetic leadership) on the dependent variable (life satisfaction) is statistically significant according to the bootstrap test, the mediation model is considered validated.

Table 2 presents the unstandardized total, direct, and indirect effects, along with the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the effects predicting empathetic leadership.

Table 2. Impact Values

Paths	Effect	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Total effects	.085	.040	.005	.164
Direct effects	.012	.046	-.079	.103
EL → JS → LS	.073	.030	.018	.135

Not: The number of bootstrap resamples for confidence intervals obtained through the percentile method: 5,000
Abbreviations: EL, Empathetic Leadership; JS, Job Satisfaction; LS, Life Satisfaction

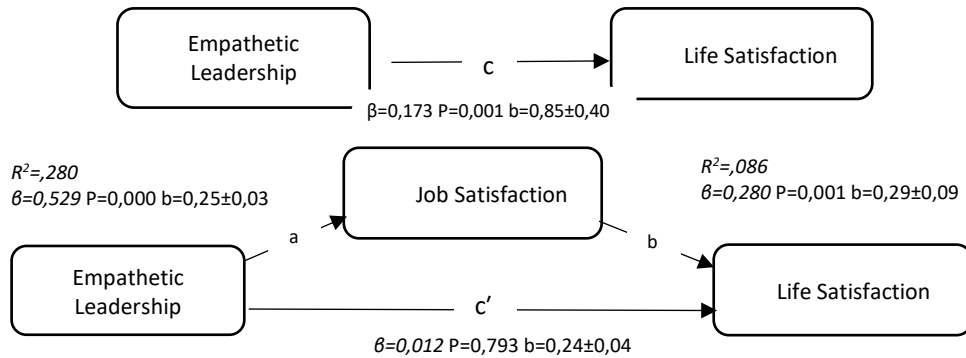
When examining Table 2, it is observed that the total effect of empathetic leadership on life satisfaction ($b = 0.085$, 95% BCA CI [0.005, 0.164]) is positive and statistically significant. Therefore, H1 hypothesis is accepted. After including the mediating variable in the model, the direct effect of empathetic leadership on life satisfaction ($b = 0.012$, 95% BCA CI [-0.079, 0.103]) is observed to be positive but not statistically significant. Upon examining the indirect effect of the mediating variable, it is found that the indirect effects of job satisfaction ($b = 0.073$, 95% BCA CI [0.018, 0.135]) are significant.

The diagram illustrating the mediation analysis is presented in Figure 2. This diagram depicts the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between empathetic leadership and life satisfaction.

Upon examining Figure 2, the path coefficient (c) from empathetic leadership (independent variable) to life satisfaction (dependent variable) is significant at 0.173 ($p=0.001$). However, when

job satisfaction (mediating variable) is included in the model, this coefficient (c') becomes non-significant at 0.012 ($p=0.793$). This suggests that job satisfaction fully mediates the effect of empathetic leadership on life satisfaction. The bootstrap analysis results indicate that the bias-corrected and accelerated confidence interval values (BootLLCI - BootULCI) do not include zero, confirming the significance of the mediation effect.

Figure 2: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Effect of Empathetic Leadership on Life Satisfaction



4. Conclusion

The importance of leadership philosophies and employee well-being is increasingly recognized in today's workplace. Both the results of scientific studies and the experiences of practitioners indicate that the well-being of employees is one of the fundamental prerequisites for productivity. Leaders and their leadership styles play a significant role in employee well-being (Arnold, 2017; Ilies, Morgeson and Nahrgang, 2005; Kalshoven and Boon, 2012). This study aims to understand the contribution of empathetic leadership, recently identified as a concept, to employee well-being and to examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in this interaction.

The research findings indicate that empathetic leadership significantly accounts for employee well-being, and job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between these two variables. The initial result of the study is that empathetic leadership is positively associated with employee well-being. Employees' perception of empathetic leadership has a positive impact on their well-being. In other words, leaders with high empathy skills are crucial determinants of employee well-being. This result underscores the importance of leaders' empathy skills. Empathetic leaders, who not only focus on employees' work outputs but also understand and show empathy towards their current emotional states resulting from positive or negative situations outside of work, have a significant influence on employee well-being. Empathetic leadership signifies a substantial emotional support provided to employees (Kock et al., 2019; Tortumlu, 2023). Therefore, it can be argued that this emotional support can address the well-being levels, which hold a significant place in employees' emotions. In other words, the importance a leader attaches to an employee's emotions positively resonates with the well-being of the employee. Leaders establishing an emotional connection with their employees, building trust, and understanding the emotional challenges felt by employees can contribute to the creation of a more positive atmosphere in the workplace. Thus, empathy plays a crucial role in both emotional and social interactions, preventing aggressive behaviors and keeping people together in understanding and collaboration (Bošnjaković and Radionov, 2018: 123).

Another result of the study is that job satisfaction plays a full mediating role in the impact of empathetic leadership on employee well-being. Empathetic leadership can enhance employee well-being through job satisfaction. In other words, empathetic leadership increases employee job satisfaction, thus positively influencing their well-being. Leaders showing sensitivity to their employees, attempting to understand their emotional needs, and establishing empathy impact the

attitudes of employees towards their work in a positive manner. Empathy allows employees to feel understood and valued, which can increase their levels of job satisfaction. Research indicates that empathetic leadership enhances job satisfaction (Kock et al., 2019; Negoro and Wibowo, 2021; Tortumlu, 2023). The empathy displayed by leaders towards employees can lead to greater satisfaction with their tasks. Leaders are the primary responsible parties for the outcomes, even though the outputs are achieved through the efforts of employees. Therefore, leaders who approach employees with empathy may receive respect and loyalty in return, contributing to employees' greater satisfaction with their work and an improvement in their performance. Empathy is an emotion-focused approach. The Affective Events Theory (Weiss and Cropanzano: 1996) posits that emotional events within the organization will influence the attitudes and behaviors of organizational members, and thus, organizational outcomes.

The research results reveal that empathetic leadership positively contributes to employee well-being through the enhancement of job satisfaction. Leaders with high empathetic leadership skills play a significant role in increasing employee job satisfaction and consequently elevating their well-being. Empathetic leaders demonstrate sensitivity to the emotional needs of their employees, contributing to the establishment of strong bonds. The strong connections formed between leaders and employees can encourage greater satisfaction with their jobs. Empathetic leaders not only focus on the work outputs of employees but also prioritize their well-being. Therefore, empathetic leadership can lead the way to positive emotions and attitudes while acting as a deterrent to undesirable behaviors and outcomes. Indeed, research indicates that empathetic leadership enhances job satisfaction (Tortumlu, 2023), promotes innovative work behaviors, improves employee performance (Kock et al., 2019), encourages organizational citizenship behavior (Fuller, 2023), enhances psychological resilience (Wibowo and Paramita, 2022), and reduces intention to leave the job (Negoro and Wibowo, 2021).

Like any scientific study, this research has certain limitations. One limitation is the adoption of a cross-sectional approach that does not establish causal relationships among the study variables. Future research should prefer longitudinal designs to better understand the relationships between these variables. Another limitation of this study is that the data were obtained using self-report measurements. While self-report measurements are commonly used, they may be subject to biases and may not fully reflect participants' actual experiences. The research results underscore the significance of leaders' empathy skills in terms of employees' work attitudes and emotions. Therefore, to enhance leaders' empathetic abilities, specialized training programs can be organized. These programs may provide support to leaders in fostering empathy, enhancing emotional understanding, and improving effective communication skills. On the other hand, research should be conducted to understand how the effects of empathetic leadership may vary based on sectoral and cultural differences. Exploring the impact of leadership styles in different sectors and cultures can provide a broader perspective on this matter.

Kaynakça

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