MPM - Master in Project Management

Applied Empathy: A New Tool In Project Management

May, 2019

Students: Ingibjörg Guðrún Guðjónsdóttir
Cpr. 310166-4729
Melkorka Jónsdóttir
Cpr. 140172-5459

Supervisor: Helga Sif Friðjónsdóttir Ph.D

Thesis of 9 ECTS Credits
Master of Project Management (MPM)
The objective of this study is to answer how different project leadership styles have an impact on a team members perceptions of project managers’ empathy. Quantitative research was conducted by interviewing five project leaders in these industries: software, innovation & production, insurance, engineering, and construction. To get additional information from their teams, quantitative research was conducted through an online survey. The answers were analyzed according to Daniel Goleman’s (2011) theory of The Six Leadership styles (Goleman, 2011) and by the 7 keys of E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.® acronym scale questions (Riess & Neporent, 2018).

This explorative study concludes that different leadership styles seem to have an impact on team members perception of project manager’s empathy. In that context, the affiliative leadership style has the most effects together with: authoritative, coaching and democratic.

This study also implies that project leaders in construction and engineering use the least affiliative leadership style when leading, and thereby perceived the least empathic by their teams.

This findings from this explorative study have led the authors of the paper to create a definition of Applied Empathy that would be useful in project management leadership. The definition emphasizes on how it could be a new interpersonal tool in project management. Subsequently, authors of this paper encourage all leaders of project management to achieve and develop their Applied Empathy skills in professional settings.

Keywords: empathy, applied empathy, emotional intelligence, project management leadership, leadership styles, project teams, interpersonal qualities
## Table of Contents

**ABSTRACT**

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 4  
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................................... 5  
   2.1. Eye of Competence: Emphasizing on empathy in the people competence .................. 5  
   2.2. Leadership style ......................................................................................................... 7  
      2.2.1. Managerial Grid .................................................................................................. 7  
      2.2.2. Emotional Intelligence ....................................................................................... 8  
      2.2.3. The Emotional Intelligent Leader ......................................................................... 9  
   2.4. Empathy: Definition and Overview ........................................................................... 10  
      2.4.1. Growing up with empathy and gender differences .............................................. 12  
      2.4.2. Empathy: Can it be developed? ........................................................................... 13  
      2.4.3. Applied Empathy ............................................................................................... 14  
3. RESEARCH METHOD ...................................................................................................... 14  
   3.1. Methodology in the research ...................................................................................... 14  
   3.2. Data collection ........................................................................................................... 15  
   3.3. Sampling .................................................................................................................... 16  
   3.4. Data analysis ............................................................................................................. 17  
   3.5. Ethics, credibility and limitations .............................................................................. 17  
4. RESEARCH RESULTS ..................................................................................................... 18  
   4.1. Authoritative Leadership style ................................................................................... 19  
   4.2. Coaching Leadership style ....................................................................................... 20  
   4.3. Affiliative Leadership style ....................................................................................... 21  
   4.4. Democratic Leadership style ..................................................................................... 23  
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION ............................................................................... 24  
6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT ...................................................................................................... 27  
8. REFERENCES .................................................................................................................... 28
1. INTRODUCTION
Is empathy the new tool in project management leadership (PM leaders)? Are the PM leaders’ interpersonal qualities/soft skills more important than traditional project management tools such as project plan, scope, time, budget and meeting quality criteria?

Authors of this paper find this subject, as stated above of the highest importance to explore further. Particularly considering the fact, that empathetic studies have been in leadership theories for considerable time known, but little has been explored in the profession of project management.

As stressed above, most PM leaders worldwide have received extensive training in applying traditional project management tools and methods. Research from Iceland by Pétursdóttir (2012) indicates that traditional project management tools are for the most part used by Icelandic PM leaders (if used at all), but the softer tools like team building and quality plans are less used resources in project leadership in Iceland (Pétursdóttir, 2012).

Considering the challenges that project leaders are facing every day; fast-paced organizational environment and more, Chalmers (2010), draws the conclusion that there is a positive correlation between hard demands and soft skills. The faster the workplace, the more essential it is to have inspirational leadership with emotional intelligence and empathy. By applying it, leaders will better understand and have more insight into the development of their staff (Chalmers, M., 2010).

At the same time, the profession of project management is fast changing (IPMA, 2015). There are many models that PM leaders can use to help them fine-tune their style: The Emotional Intelligence model from Goleman (2011). The Managerial Grid model by Blake and Mouton (1966) in De Mascia book (2012), and the IPMA model (2015) are among many of them.

During the process of writing this paper, it was discovered that a lot had been written about leadership and empathy, and emotional intelligence and empathy. On the other hand, there was not a lot of material in the field of PM leadership and empathy. Could interpersonal skills like empathy in projects be the new tool in PM leadership, as it seems to be in leadership in general?

In the last decade, researchers have increasingly been studying the softer sides of leadership, for example, interpersonal qualities like Emotional Intelligence, and how it relates to higher performance in leadership. A leading author and researcher Daniel Goleman (2006; 2011) states that empathy is a necessary core element needed in the process of developing Emotional Intelligence. Empathy is an important interpersonal skill and it is essential for leaders to master this skill to be a productive and successful leader.
According to Sinar et al., (2016), empathy is considered to be an important factor in leadership success (Sinar et al., 2016).

Thus, empathy is considered an important interpersonal skill and that it is essential for leaders to master this skill to be a productive and effective leaders (Clarke, 2010; Goleman, 2006; Holt & Marques, 2012; Humphrey, 2002; Kellett et al., 2002; Rajah et al., 2011; Sadri et al., 2011).

It is the author's assessment, that the area of Emotional Intelligence and especially how to apply empathy in PM leadership needs more attention and should be explored further. In continuation, authors concluded that it would be of high interest to research how PM leaders out in the fields are using these skills, or if they are using them at all in their leadership approach toward their teams.

The research question we aim to answer is:

What is the impact of different project leadership styles on team members perceptions of project manager’s empathy?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
Project management success has for a long time focused on the iron triangle of time, cost and quality (IMPA 2016). In the book; Human Factor in Project Management, Dinsmore (1990) pointed out the importance of the human factor, and that if it was not taken into a consideration in the management of projects, then schedules and charts would be of a little value (Dinsmore; 1990). Atkinson (1999) then further suggested that a shift could be significantly helped if a definition for project management would be produced, which did "not include limited success criteria” (Atkinson, 1999, p. 341). That is why the authors of this paper are focusing on interpersonal skills, with an emphasis on empathy. The authors believe empathy to have an important role, to play in today’s project manager leadership.

2.1. Eye of Competence: Emphasizing on empathy in the people competence
The IPMA Individual Competence Baseline (2015), (hereafter referred to as the PM model), defines the competencies required by individuals, working in the field of project management. It is project oriented and PM Leaders can use it as guidelines in their work. The PM model has defined 29 competencies, organized into three areas (Figure 1):

Practice - Defines fourteen technical aspects of managing projects. (For example: project design, scope, time, quality, finance, risk, plan, and control).

Perspective - Defines five contextual competencies (For example: strategy, governance, power, interests, and values).
People - It includes ten personal and interpersonal competencies areas, defines the personal and social competence of the individual including; (1) Self-reflection and self-management, (2) Personal integrity and reliability, (3) Personal communication, (4) Relationships and engagement, (5) Leadership, (6) Teamwork, (7) Conflict and crisis, (8) Resourcefulness, (9) Negotiation, and (10) Results orientation (IMPA, 2015).

As shown in the IMPA Annex A for Cross-reference to ISO 211500: 2012, then these themes are addressed in the ISO 211500: 2012 (IMPA, 2015). But as shown in the IMPA Annex B for Cross-reference to ISO 211504: 2015, then these themes are not addressed in the ISO 211504: 2015, at all (IMPA, 2015).

This study will focus on the competences in the People area and aim to explore empathy as a fundamental element needed to master the different competences.

![Figure 1. The Eye of Competence](image)

Further guidelines for these elements in the People area states that individuals need to have personal integrity and consistency in values, emotions, tone of voice, and actions. Individuals that show interest in others and practice open communication, so people feel that they are heard and their opinions are valued, among other things. All of these elements can be hypothesized to be connected to empathetic actions. Empathy is further emphasized in chapter 4.4.4. about: Relationships and engagement; “the ability to form a strong relationship is primarily driven by social competencies such as empathy, trust, confidence and communication skills” (IPMA, 2015, p. 72). In chapter 4.4.4.2. and 4.4.4.3. it states; “to demonstrate empathy, it means to show interest and involvement with others and their wellbeing. ...emotions expressed or just experience by others. ...relates and reacts to these emotions in a sympathetic or compassionate way. ...offer support, even when it is not asked for” (IPMA, 2015, p. 73).

It should be noted that the authors of this paper are not in full agreement with the last two paragraphs above, as if you are tapping into sympathy or compassion then you have to be very concise about how you do that and be sure that you are not making
their feelings yours. PM leaders need to do that in a very concise and professional way, without getting lost in their own feelings.

It is quite clear from the PM model, that PM leaders need to develop their interpersonal skills, both in understanding their own feelings as well as those of the team (IPMA, 2015). From the PM model, authors can categorize some core competent skills in empathy for PM leaders to develop. Thus are; (1) Being able to use different styles of effective communication, (2) Active listening, (3) Questioning techniques, (4) Empathy with effective use of body language and tone of voice.

2.2. Leadership style
In the PM model, it is stated that: "A leader has to be aware of different leadership styles and decide which is appropriate for his or her nature, for the project, for the team being managed and for other interested parties, in all types of situations" (IPMA, 2015, p. 76).

The authors of this paper suggest that The Managerial Grid model can be useful for the PM leaders to assess and decide which leadership style is needed for each project. The model will be discussed below.

2.2.1. Managerial Grid
The Managerial Grid model has concern for people (on the vertical axis), and concern for production/tasks (on the horizontal axis). The Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton (1966) in De Mascia book (2012), focuses on the balance between these two axes, that includes five different leadership styles (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. The Managerial Grid](image)

These five styles are categorized in Figure 3 into five leadership styles and get a score from 1 - 9 with regard to if the leader scores high or low in these vertical and horizontal axes.
De Mascia (2012) puts emphasis on the importance of focusing not only on tasks, as then a PM leader is spending less time focusing on the people side, and that can be the most unpredictable and volatile element of the balance of the whole project (De Mascia, 2012).

These five different leadership styles can be used in various project settings, within the project life cycle, as it is seen from the scores in Figure 3. The Team Leader is emphasized, as the most effective leadership style in this model and that is highly congruent with what the authors found in Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence leadership as described below in 2.2.2.

### 2.2.2. Emotional Intelligence

The concept of Emotional Intelligence was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and in their literature, they stated that; “empathy may be a central characteristic of emotional intelligence behavior” (Salovey and Mayer, 1990, p.194).

Based on a three-year study of over 3000 executives, Daniel Goleman (2011) identified six different leadership styles. Every style will likely resonate with anyone who is in a leading position, is led or does both (Goleman, 2011). This leadership style will be the author’s guidelines for going deeper into the concept of PM leadership and empathy, as it gives an insight into how different leadership styles can affect performance and result. Goleman (2011) suggests that leaders should not only use one style but should be capable of switching between different styles and emphasizes that each leadership style comes from different components of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2011). These six leadership styles are (Figure 4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADERSHIP STYLE</th>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>CONCERN PEOPLE</th>
<th>CONCERN PRODUCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impoverished Management</td>
<td>Laissez-faire style; minimal effort on management; hoping to avoid blame for errors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Club Management</td>
<td>Focus on creating safe, comfortable working environment; minimal conflict</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Management</td>
<td>Autocratic style and consistent. Workers have to complete task – nothing else</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Manager</td>
<td>Staff closely involved in decision – making and feel valued</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle of the Road Management</td>
<td>Compromises made to achieve acceptable performance; thought to be the less effective leadership style</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. The Managerial Grid Categorizing Model
Goleman (2011) stresses that leaders that have mastered a least four styles; authoritative, democratic, affiliative and coaching leadership styles are most likely to have success in overall performance and a better climate in the workplace. These leadership styles can all be developed over time and if a leader would like to develop further their affiliative style, it would require him or her to increase the use of empathy in leadership approach (Goleman, 2011). It is an interesting factor that Goleman (2011) describes empathy in business as an "antidote“ saying:

"Empathy is an antidote...Globalization and dialogue can easily lead to misunderstanding.....people wonder how leaders can make hard decisions if they are „feeling“ for all the people who will be affected...rather, empathy means thoughtfully considering employee’s feeling - along with other factors - in process of making intelligent decisions...they use their knowledge to improve their companies in subtle but important ways”. (Goleman, 2011, loc. 452).

2.2.3. The Emotional Intelligent Leader
The profession of project management is a role of leadership and Goleman’s theory (Goleman, 2011) touches on the importance of empathy in project leadership. Emotional Intelligence and leadership came more into fashion when Daniel Goleman published his book in 1995 on Emotional Intelligence, and scholars have published a lot on empathetic research since then. (Clarke, 2010; Kellett et al., 2002; Riess & Neporent, 2018; Sadri et al., 2011;). Goleman (2011) explains how Salovey and Mayer defined Emotional Intelligence into five main domains (Figure 5):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>This style is about clear goals and vision, planning and leadership skills. It motivates people by making clear how their work fits into larger vision for the organization. It gives people freedom to innovate and experiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>This style empowers people for the future, identifies people’s strengths and weaknesses. It delegates work, give employees assignments that are challenging and improves results. It highlights integrity and perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
<td>This style is an emphatic team player, human relations builder and values bonds and harmony – people comes first is the strategy and it revolves around employees. It has a positive effect on communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>This style is about experience, passion and drive. It keeps moral high and listens to people’s views, opinions and concerns. It builds trust, collaboration and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacesetting</td>
<td>This style sets a high performance and expects excellence and self-direction. It as about setting a fast pace, achieving and getting quick results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>This style is about top-down decision making and can literally pull new ideas down. It does not motivate people and should not be applied often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. The Six Leadership Styles by Goleman
Figure 5. Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Knowing one’s own feelings, where they are coming from, handling them and being able to understand where others are coming from with their feelings, is a central point of the theory of Emotional Intelligence, and empathy plays a role there. To understand people's behavior it is important to know how the brain functions. The limbic system in the brain is the emotional part of the brain. The Amygdala stores emotional memories and scans for danger and it gives out the “fight or flight” responses. This part reacts fastest to emotions without thinking. It is important to understand, that when people react without thinking, they are not in control of their emotions. The Thalamus does constantly look for information and process them. The Hippocampus compares the present with previous information, along with the Cortex. When they all work together, then the emotional brain is slower and gives people more time to think, feel and reason before they act (Owen et al., 2004). Project manager’s empathic effort, requires these special brain circuits that allow her/him to perceive, process, and respond to others in the right empathic way. "When people show empathy for others, they are usually good at perceiving what others feel, able to process the information and to respond effectively" (Riess & Neporent, 2018, p. 10).

Gabriel (2107) stated that there is also a relationship between empathy and mindfulness. Mindfulness enables people to be in this moment, experiencing the “now”, as it is right at this very moment (Gabriel, 2017). For leaders to be excellent in the five Emotional Intelligence skills and empathy, it can help to be a mindfulness practitioner.

2.4. Empathy: Definition and Overview
The word “empathy” itself has only been used in our language for about a century, although philosopher and writers have been researching on the subject for a long time (Riess & Neporent, 2018). Empathy comes from the German word Einfühlung which means „feeling into“. It was introduced by German aestheticians in the mid to the late nineteenth century. They used this word to describe the emotional experience that was evoked by viewing a work of art and feeling one’s way into an emotional experience.
“It originated from the early twentieth-century Greek empatheia (from em „in“ + pathos „feeling“)” (Riess & Neporent, 2018, p. 12). Goleman (2006) says that "Motor mimicry", is the original technical sense of the word empathy as it was first used by Titchener (Goleman, 2006). "Motor mimicry has been conceptualized as a primitive empathy, as a reflex based on cues previously to one’s own direct experience, as an expression of vicarious emotion, and as a manifestation of a trait“ (Bavelas et al., 1986, p. 322). When interacting with other people, individuals do notice and sometimes mimic - although they are not always conscious of other people’s behavior and feelings. The original technical sense of the word “empathy” as a translation of Einfühlung, was first used in the 1920s by E.B. Titchener an American psychologist (Titchener, 2014). Riess & Neporent (2018) have stated further that; "Empathy as we now use the word broadens beyond sympathy, or feeling bad for others in discomfort, into an understanding of how others actually feel emotionally and seeing the world from their perspective“ (Riess & Neporent, 2018, p. 14). Authors in this study find it important to point out the statement of Lennertz (2019) that says; “empathy is not sympathy, two words that are often confused with one another”. (Lennertz, 2019) Goleman (2006) says that empathy is the ability to put yourself in other people shoes and view things through their eyes, whereas sympathy is to feel sorrow for another (Goleman, 2006). There has though been many definitions of empathy. This has caused confusion among different types of scholars, including philosophers, psychologist, scientists, and educators that have been studying it, and how they have attempted to define it as a single trait (Riess & Neporent, 2018). The definition and conception of empathy is often mismatching, Cuff et al, (2016) found for example 43 mismatchings of the definition of empathy and some of them included sympathy (Cuff et al., 2016).

In 1955 Reader’s Digest introduced the term empathy to the general public as the „ability to appreciate the other person’s feelings without yourself becoming so emotionally involved that your judgment is affected” (Riess & Neporent, 2018, p. 14). The authors of this study find it a crucial point for an understanding of the concept of empathy in professional settings.

A person can feel someone's sentiments and can understand it, but the person is not feeling bad for the individual or make their feelings their own. Therefore, a person is not totally sympathizing.

Empathy, therefore (as authors are using the word) has broadened beyond sympathy, which means feeling bad for others in discomfort, into a more of an understanding of how others actually feel emotionally and seeing the world from their perspective (Goleman, 2006; Riess & Neporent, 2018). Empathy is a complex phenomenon and there is; "growing body of evidence showing that empathy is a key
element in emotional and interpersonal functioning and that it should be considered to be a multidimensional concept” (Carré et al., 2013, p. 686).

Authors took a further look into the work of Daniel Goleman (2006) and Riess & Neporent (2018) that have broken empathy into three categories (Figure 6):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Empathy</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Empathy</td>
<td>The thinking empathy, helps us to understand how a person may think and feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Empathy</td>
<td>Affective empathy, helps us to build up an emotional connection with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate or Motivation Empathy</td>
<td>For response, it moves us to take action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Three Categories of Empathy

Riess & Neporent (2018) says that there is increasing evidence that suggests, that empathy is partially hardwired into these three categories into the brain. “How, why and when you feel empathy is unique to you, though the neurobiological activation works roughly the same way for everyone” (Riess & Neporent, 2018, p.28).

2.4.1. Growing up with empathy and gender differences
“The lessons in empathy begin in infancy, with parents who attune to their baby’s feelings” (Goleman, 2006, p. 191). They do this through eye contact, postures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. If we do not have this input from early on, it’s much harder to follow through, with listening and responding the right way in each situation (Riess & Neporent, 2018). The cost of misattunement for a child can be great, and a “prolonged absence of attunement between parent and child takes a tremendous emotional toll on the child” (Goleman, 2006, p.101). Holt & Marques (2012) referred to studies that were done in 2006 from the UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, where they found out that younger people are less capable of empathy-based emotions than those who are mature (Holt & Marques, 2012). But there is hope in reparative relationships. Goleman (2006) points out that emotionally adept parents can do a lot to help their children, from an early age, with their emotions: “learning how to recognize, manage, and harness their feelings; empathizing; and handling the feelings that arise in their relationships” (Goleman, 2006, p. 191), these skills can also be build up with friends. "Relationships throughout life-with friends or relatives, ... or in psychotherapy - continually reshape your working model of relationships. An imbalance at one point can be corrected later; it’s an ongoing, lifelong process” (Goleman, 2006, p.101).

There seems to be some gender difference in empathy. Numbers of studies’ shows that women have higher emotional intelligence than men. Byron (2010) points out that females are better in perceiving nonverbal emotional expressions. He also points out that female and male manager use emotional information differently: To enhance
subordinates satisfaction, therefore, do female “receive higher performance ratings from their supervisor and higher satisfaction ratings from their subordinates, perhaps due to gender stereotypes prescribing emotional sensitivity to female managers” (Byron, 2010). In a study of over seven thousand people in the United States and eighteen other countries shows that: “the benefits of being able to read feelings from nonverbal cues included being better adjusted emotionally, more popular, more outgoing, and-perhaps not surprisingly - more sensitive. In general, women are better than men at this kind of empathy” (Goleman, 2006, p. 97).

2.4.2. Empathy: Can it be developed?
To work on emotional ability and empathy, individuals can tune into these segments and work on it. As Holt & Marques (2012) points out from the Weinstein (2009) studies, people can be taught to ask questions that enhance understanding, builds up connections, and to perceive emotions of others (Holt & Marques, 2012). In Miller’s, R.W., book; Listening Well - The Art of Empathic Understanding (2018), is it proposed that empathic skills can be trained and developed further in adult life. Individuals can for example, practice their empathic skills through active listening and verbal reflection. In a nutshell, it is about empathy that is accurate; the ability to understand clearly what other people are experiencing, thinking, feeling and meaning (Miller, R., 2018). To do that the individual needs to step a little away from being the center of attention; step a little outside one’s own universe and show genuine interest and curiosity about others and what they perceive and experience. Developing empathic understanding involves respecting and valuing differences. The more individuals work on it, the more natural it becomes (Miller, R., 2018).

People are now being taught to understand and use empathy in their professional lives, for example, like in the company Empathetics Inc. where Riees is the co-founder with the Massachusetts General Hospital (Riess & Neporent, 2018). Finally, Goleman (2011) says that it takes months to improve one's emotional intelligence, because of the brain function (in chapter 2.2.3.). He states that to master a new behavior, the emotional center needs practice and a lot of repetition to change our habits (Goleman, 2011).
2.4.3. Applied Empathy
Applied Empathy is not a scientific term. That is why authors have created a definition of Applied Empathy to propose as a term in project management leadership settings, and empathize on it as a new tool for project management and leadership (Figure 7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of Applied Empathy in Project Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Empathy is the ability to sense people's feelings in the moment, allowing the project leader to respond to a team member or a team - in a way that is congruent to the person's or team's emotions, without becoming so emotionally involved that judgment is affected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. Definition of Applied Empathy as Proposed by Authors

The term of Applied Empathy became apparent to the authors from Michael Ventura’s book; Applied Empathy - The Language of Leadership (2018). Ventura uses it in terms of design solutions, to spark innovation and to do deal with difficult challenges by using empathy. For the authors to twist it around, and turn it up on PM leadership, was an idea that unfolds around the word empathy, but applying empathy consciously in professional settings of the project management leadership. In reviewing the literature, it has been pointed out over and over again, that empathy is an important interpersonal skill and that it is essential for leaders to manage this skill to be productive and successful in their leadership style (Clarke, 2010; Goleman, 2006; Holt & Marques, 2012; Humphrey, 2002; Kellett et al., 2002; Rajah et al., 2011; Sadri et al., 2011).

3. RESEARCH METHOD
The aim of the research was to get a deeper understanding of the impact of different project leadership styles on team members perception of project manager’s empathy. As far as the authors know, the concept of empathy (as it is proposed by the author’s in Figure 7), has not been defined like this before in project leadership settings and is unexplored. Explorative research methods are therefore used to begin to understand the concept and to go deeper into the subject.

3.1. Methodology in the research
The authors used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data and to compare results between the PM leader and their team. Here it is important to emphasize that PM leaders are the main subjects in this research. By gathering quantitative data from their teams it would yield deeper additional information and understanding from their perceived experience of their PM leaders.
3.2. Data collection
Data were collected in April 2019 by interviewing five PM leaders (N=5) that came from diverse enterprises located in the Reykjavik area. The interviews were standard interviews, semi-structured and focused on leadership styles, interpersonal qualities and perceived empathic skills. The questions were not sent in advance but the topic and research question was known by the interviewees. Below are examples of questions from the interviews (Figure 8):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of questions from the interview / N=5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define your leadership style?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you provide feedback on regular basis to your team/people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you define your main strengths as a project leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you cope with stressful situations at work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think your team/people perceive you as a project leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you take care of you physically and/or mentally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you consciously applying empathy in your work setting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8. Example of Questions from the Interviews

After the interviews, the authors asked for permission to send a survey to 6 - 12 members of their teams/subordinates. It was granted and the authors got permission to send team members the survey with 12 questions about leadership styles, interpersonal skills and perceived empathy. The first question in the survey asked team members to put down in numeric orders what they perceived as the most important leadership styles from 1- 10. Then there were six questions, with 4 points Likert-type scale and one question with 5 points Likert-type scale. There were also 2 questions with yes and no options and a possibility of open box question, along with two others open box questions. Below is an example of questions from the survey (Figure 9):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of questions from the Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you consider to be the main qualities in your project manager’s leadership style?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your project manager shown interest in your wellbeing in the last 3 months?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you perceive that your project manager is making an effort to show you and your team understanding and kindness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you perceive that your project manager is making an effort to use active listening and checks for common understanding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you perceive that your project manager is using applied empathy in a work setting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Example of Questions from the Survey
Authors asked the PM leaders and their teams as well to reply to the 7 keys of E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.® acronym scaled questions (Riess & Neporent, 2018) These questions were put up to a simple scale of yes and no answers. They were graded on the scale from 0-7 yes. Zero yes, being not empathic at all, 3-4 yes, being somewhat empathic, and 7 yes, being very empathic. The scale measures these facts (Figure 10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>7 keys of E.M.P.A.T.H.Y®</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Eye Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you look someone deep into the eye when you talk to them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.</td>
<td>Muscles of facial expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you notice smaller and/or larger facial change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.</td>
<td>Posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you notice how people use their body poisture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Affect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you notice how the other person is feeling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.</td>
<td>Tone of voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you notice the change in tone of voice of people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>Hearing the whole person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you a good listener?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y.</td>
<td>Your response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you notice how you feel when you are in the presence of other person or team?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10. The 7 Keys of E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.® acronym scale by Riess

3.3. Sampling
The interviewees (N=5) were chosen with guidance from the director at The Project Management Association in Iceland. In the first round researches asked for PM leaders with more than 8 years of experience, with an MPM degree and/or B or C, IPMA level as a project manager in diverse disciplines and companies. The director recommended some individuals that fulfilled those criteria, they were contacted through email and asked to participate in the research. Through that process a total of five PM leaders agreed to participate, the last one got recommended through acquaintances in the field of project management. The interviewees (N=5) came from diverse enterprises ranging from software, innovation & production, insurance, construction, and engineering. In total there were three men and two women. All participant in the teams received a survey by email through SurveyMonkey.com. The survey was open from April 14th to May 3rd. Of 41 participants, a total of 23 responded 19 men and 4 women which represents a 56% rate of responding.
3.4. Data analysis
The interviews were taped in Icelandic, net written and sent back to the interviewee for approval. After approval, researches used data from all 5 interviews as the main background for the analysis. The answers from the survey on the E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.® acronym scale were also used as data to compare between the PM leaders and the teams on the finding of the E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.® acronym scale and perceived leadership style and empathy and to find out if there was a coherency between PM leaders and their teams. The results from the interviews and surveys were compared to get a deeper look into the PM leaders perceived leadership style, interpersonal qualities and empathy, and how their teams are perceiving it. Authors used the Six Leadership styles (Figure 4) by Goleman (2011) as a classification and categorized interviewees leadership styles. It was based on the interviews and how their teams perceived them, by their written answers and overall score in the survey.

Authors of this paper then used the overall data to rate the PM leaders by analyzing that information, giving 1-3 points as an overall score on Goleman’s Six Leadership style. (Goleman, 2011). This overall data analysis was categorized into four leadership style themes; authoritative, coaching, affiliative and democratic, that were considered the most descriptive, for the results of this research. As none of the PM leaders were rated in the coercive or pacesetting styles, these are not taken into further consideration.

3.5. Ethics, credibility and limitations
During the research, five experienced PM leaders with an MPM degree and/or B or C IPMA certification were interviewed. The interviews were sent back to the interviewee for approval before analyzing the data. Authors then analyzed the data, and from its background, describe interviewees views on project leadership styles, interpersonal skills, and empathy. Only one interview was conducted. Because of the small sampling, it can limit the credibility of the results. On the other hand, the strengths of the research is also that the interviewees represent five different enterprises in the field of PM leadership, three men and two women. All data from the interviews were deleted by the end of the research and interviewees were informed. The survey was sent to the teams by email on different dates (after each interview). The rate of response from the teams was different, compared by companies. Possibly the Easter vacation did have an effect on responses in some cases, but the overall rate of response 56% was thought acceptable. Because of the low response rates from women in the project teams, as a total of 4 women out of 23 respondents, authors can only speculate on the findings for further evaluation. But it is clearly a limitation for the research because of the uneven gender ratio.
4. RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter will describe the main results from the research, based on the interviews (N=5) and with additional information from the survey. From the interviews and additional data, the researchers analyzed four main themes, based on Goleman’s Six Leadership styles (Goleman, 2011). These themes in leadership styles are: authoritative, coaching, affiliative and democratic.

Authors classified 12 sub-themes, in connection to the main themes (Figure 11):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes in Leadership</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Affiliative</th>
<th>Democratic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear goals and vision</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Passion and drive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Human relations skills</td>
<td>Experience and knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning skills</td>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Communications skills</td>
<td>Builds trust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After categorizing the themes, the authors used the overall data from the interviews and surveys and rated the interviewees by analyzing that information; giving 1-3 points as an overall score on each theme. Each interviewee could score from 8 - 24 points as total in main themes, based on sub-themes (Figure 12):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PM Interviewee</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Affiliative</th>
<th>Democratic</th>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>Resp. rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Female</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 2 2 3 3</td>
<td>22 83%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Female</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3</td>
<td>24 40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Male</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3 3 2 1 2 1 2 1</td>
<td>15 33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Male</td>
<td>Innov.&amp;Prod.</td>
<td>3 3 3 3 2 2 3 3</td>
<td>22 82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Male</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3 2 3 2 2 1 2 1</td>
<td>16 38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in figure 12, the PM leaders score is in the range from 15 - 24 points and everybody is considered having leadership qualities, as perceived by themselves and their teams in every theme: authoritative, coaching, affiliative and democratic.

There is however a difference in score in comparison by industries and it is apparent that in construction and engineering, the overall score is the lowest, especially as seen in the affiliative leadership style that contains; empathy, human relations and communications skills.

In consideration, a lower rate of response from the teams in construction (33%) and in engineering (38%) than in the other industries can be a limitation for the research and can, therefore, affect the overall score.
In continuation, a deeper review/analysis is described in subsection 4.1. in context to the four main leadership style themes: authoritative, coaching, affiliative and democratic.

4.1. Authoritative Leadership style
When authors asked interviewees about their perceived leadership style in relation to the authoritative style: goals and vision, leadership skills and planning, the answers were quite similar. Most members in their teams perceived it alike. A majority of the PM leaders score high on that scale as seen in Figure 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>TEAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Female</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Female</td>
<td>Incurance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Male</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Male</td>
<td>Innovation and Production</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Male</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13. Overall Score in Authoritative Leadership Style

Below are some statements from interviewees and their teams in context to the authoritative leadership style:

Interviewee nr. 4 (Production and Innovation):

"I’m a relative soft leader. I draw up the vision so everybody knows the goals. So I draw the vision, make it visible... this is what I want us to achieve and this is a long term vision and then we have a short term vision, visually”.

The team said about his authoritative style:

"He is fair, with clear goals and interested in doing things better, open for innovations and to invest in the future”.

Interviewee nr. 1 (Software):

"I’m very organized and I work in a narrow box...but with a lot of flexibility....It is important that everybody in the teams find themselves as a part of the product...like an ownership...then it is more likely that the product will get it’s on “life”...open communication, clear roles and goals”.

The team said about her authoritative style:

"She participates in projects wholeheartedly, works longer hours if needed and sets an example for others if needed...Leadership skills”.

It is though noticeable that in the area of construction (interviewee nr. 5) authors analyze that team members give a slighter lower score to their PM leader. Below is a statement from him:
Interviewee nr. 5 (Construction):

“My leadership style is rather relaxed, I’m not directly ordering men around, but rather asks them if they can do this or that, and by that way try to pull it forward”.

The team said about his authoritative style:

“...he lets’ men work together..planning skills... project closure”.

4.2. Coaching Leadership style

When authors asked interviewees about their perceived leadership style in relation to the coaching style: empowerment, integrity and perspective, most of them perceive themselves relatively high in that area, expect interviewee nr. 3 (Construction) that received only 2 points, as analyzed by authors.

Three teams are perceiving their PM leader as highly qualified in the coaching style, (Software, Insurance and Innovation & Production) but two teams perceived their PM leaders a little lower on the scale (Construction and Engineering) or a total of 2 and 1 points (Figure 14):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>TEAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Female</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Female</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Male</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Male</td>
<td>Innovation and Production</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Male</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14. Overall Score in The Coaching Leadership Style

Below are some statements from interviewees and their teams in context to the coaching leadership style:

Interviewee 2 (Insurance):

“It’s easier to think about this when you have a full-time team, then it is my role to create an environment to help them to make something awesome. My role is to create an environment where there is trust and where people can deal with difficult things... we come together and make something that no one could have done by oneself”.

“...I use a lot one on one interviews with people in the teams and then I use the Retro method; what do you think is going well, what do you think is going bad and what do you wanna do differently?...outstanding teams have the feeling that they are safe, and they belong...”.

The team said about her coaching style:

“Highly excellent in working with people, all kinds of people. Really smart and has a good overview of projects...empowers people and you want to work for her. Gets the best out of her colleagues. Enables them to use their talents.”
Interviewee nr. 5 (Engineering):

"...it is important, to be honest to oneself and to others...to say things like they are. Integrity, yes. Honesty. There are many views and I'm not always agreeing on all of them...sometimes we discuss that we are not in an agreement...but then we just discuss it and then afterward, gets some coffee together...
...I'm just one of the workers, there is just a certain delegation of the workload”.

The team said about his coaching style:

"...he has perspective and he has a drive...”.

Interviewee nr. 3 (Construction):

"It is important that you have trust...that you have integrity and don't give misleading information or have dirty goals...and don't expect more out of people than they can deliver”.

The team said about his coaching style:

“Empowerment is one of his leadership skills”.

4.3. Affiliative Leadership style

When authors asked interviewees about their perceived leadership style in relation to the affiliative style: empathy, human relations skills, communications skills, most of them perceive themselves relatively lower than in other areas/themes, expect interviewee nr. 2 (Insurance), This individual received 3 points as analyzed by the authors and as perceived by the team.

Other interviewers (Software, and Innovation & Production) are perceiving their affiliative style as generally a little bit higher than their teams are perceiving it (however, they get the same score as a total of 2 points), and two teams (Construction and Engineering) perceive their PM leaders low on the scale, or as a total of 1 point each (Figure 15):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>TEAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Female</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Female</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Male</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Male</td>
<td>Innovation and Production</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Male</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15. Overall Score in The Affiliative Leadership Style

Below are some statements from interviewees and their teams in context to the affiliative leadership style:
Interviewee 1 (Software):

“I’m not using much time in listening to each and everybody about their weekend in meetings, you also need to focus…..I also want to push projects forward and not give too many opportunities to hear about the divorce story or about the purchase of your new house…we can do that when we take a coffee break”. 

“But, inside my team I want of course to know what is going on in team members personal life, we are very open and they also know about my life as well…Actually, I’m very aware of that, and I want to create trust in my team…then I also have to trust the team. That’s why they also need to know about my personal problems if they arise”.

The team said about her affiliative style:

“It can well be that she uses applied empathy, even though I don’t recognize it directly. That’s how it would be best and that’s why the experience was good”.

Interviewee 2 (Insurance):

“I think that it is of the most important in project management to have this human nature and to be able to lead teams, and a part of that is empathy and a deep understanding of human beings. If I were hiring a project manager, then my focus would be on the human skills, not if he or she would know all the traditional project management tools, because it’s much easier to train up PM tools than human skills”.

“Yes, I use empathy in professional settings, but it sounds a little bit like you are doing something with a political twist. I don’t use it as a tool to achieve something because…you need to have a clear purpose why you are trying to approach people, why are you trying to build trust and why do you want people to open up to something. It is a little like with dependency, there is a dangerous limit that you don’t want to cross, some kind of morality”.

The team said about her affiliative style:

“She gave everybody change to express their feelings every morning and showed interest in the team. I perceive that she tries to put herself in the shoes of others, and tries to understand their point of view”.

Interviewee 3 (Construction):

“…there are not many women in this industry and that why it is a bit of a man’s world…and men usually don’t express their feelings so much…they usually don’t give each other compliments or revile each other, at least not face to face”.

“But sometimes feedback comes…but the tendency is to look more at the negative things when giving feedback, unfortunately…it should be more of positive feedback”.

Interviewee 4 (Innovation and Production):

“Yes, I use empathy in professional settings, I listen to people, checks for understanding and then put their feelings into words and what they are describing, and then get a confirmation back, or not…and I acknowledge them as human beings, and how they are feeling that day.

“I’m open, I think about how I’m feeling, and I just want people to talk about it, and at the same time, I show people that it is OK to have a bad day, just tired and it’s OK to say it. But, when you are as a project leader for example in difficult conversations, then I don’t think you should involve your own feelings, you have to separate it”.

22
The team said about his affiliative style:

“*My projects are shown interest*”.
“*You have someone that stands by your side. You have that feeling that the things we do matter*”.
“*I feel that I have his full support, but at the same time, I have to deliver*”.

4.4. Democratic Leadership style

When authors asked interviewees about their perceived leadership style in relation to the democratic style: passion, experience and knowledge and builds trust, three out of five interviewees perceived themselves, high on the scale, as a total of 3 points and their teams agreed.

Two of the interviewees (Construction and Engineering) are a little lower on the scale and their teams are perceiving them low as well, as a total 1 point to each (Figure 16):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>TEAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Female</td>
<td>Software</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Female</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Male</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Male</td>
<td>Innovation and Production</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Male</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16. Overall Score in The Democratic Leadership style

Below are some statements from interviewees and their teams in context to the democratic leadership style:

Interviewee 1 (Software) said:

“As a project manager, it has helped a lot to have a good insight into the industry, I have a lot of experience in the field, I know how the system works. I think it would be difficult for someone with little or no experience to run projects here”.

“To build trust you need to have open communication, clear roles and vision...humor, open for views, let everyone speak their mind but at the same time to be very organized...but also have flexibility”.

Interviewee 2 (Insurance) said:

“I think I have such a presence that it is quite easy for me to build trust among my teams and I’m so lucky that I’m a positive person by nature, and it’s easy for me to come with some kind of a positive vibe...and inject this energy to teams”.

Her teams said:

“*Passion and experience, human relations*”.

“*With passion and motivation and a lot of patience can my project manager everything*”.

Interviewee 4 (Innovation and Production) said:
"I got recently feedback that everybody was happy here in this department or at least many were satisfied. I heard that I’m fair, understanding, authentic, have a clear vision, is certain and is trustworthy. People come to me and they trust me, most of them...not all. It is unreasonable that everybody trust you, unfortunately”.

His team said:

“Human relations skills show his colleagues trust and gives them 100% freedom to finish their projects and take responsibility for their work. Helps with motivation and prevents stagnation”.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to explore the impact of different project leadership styles on team members perceptions of a project manager’s empathy. As the authors of this paper have immersed themselves into the relevant literature around empathy and leadership in project management many additional questions have surfaced. The most relevant questions are: (1) Is empathy in PM leadership a new tool in project management? (2) Are the interpersonal skills of the PM leaders more important than technical skills, (the traditional PM tools)? (3) What is Applied Empathy all about? and (4) By applying empathy, do PM leaders achieve overall better project results?

With the result discussed above in mind, it seems that applying empathy in PM leadership matters for the overall well-being of the teams as well as for the PM leaders. The results indicate that the PM leaders in insurance, software, and innovation & production score highest in the affiliative leadership style: empathy, human relation, and communication skills as well as having the highest score in empathetic skills as perceived by their teams. All of the five interviewees scored considerably high in all of the four leadership styles; authoritative, coaching, affiliative, and democratic. This indicates a constructive leadership approach towards their teams, even though some of the PM leaders appear not to be always aware of these elements while leading.

This is also documented in the literature review as Goleman (2011) states that leaders, that have mastered at least four of the above leadership styles are most likely to have success in overall performance and create a better climate in the workplace. These leadership styles can all be developed over time and if a leader would like to develop a particular style further, for example, their affiliative style, it would require to improve the use of empathy in leadership approach (Goleman, 2011).

With this in mind, it is also an indicator that the PM leaders that have the overall highest score in this study, especially in the affiliative style, are more conscious about their leadership style. These PM leaders use and develop their interpersonal skills, including empathy, systematically in their professional settings. The same individuals practice regular meditation or yoga to develop these skills further.
Even though this study sample is small, it suggests it that there is coherence between how conscious the PM leaders are about applying empathy in their leadership style and how much empathic awareness is perceived by their teams. Also, the data suggests that in the field of construction and engineering, applying empathy as a part of the PM leadership, is apparently lower, or less used consciously, than in the three other cases that we studied.

This is congruent with the literature review, where it is mentioned that research has shown a gender difference in how individuals apply empathy. Studies have shown that women have a higher Emotional Intelligence than men, and female managers use it differently and because of that, generally receive higher satisfaction ratings from their subordinates (Byron, 2010). It was also perceived by the authors when interviewing the PM leaders, that the women found the subject of empathy, a little easier to approach than men, which was corroborated by literature findings.

The good news is, that applying empathy in professional settings can be trained. In the literature review, it is mentioned that to work on emotional ability and empathy, individuals can for example train and practice communication skills like active listening and reflection (Holt & Marques, 2012; Miller, R., 2018). This study’s results suggest that PM leaders who harmonize with their team’s emotional state and apply empathy get better scores, and their teams imply that they are willing to walk the extra mile for their PM leader.

According to this study, leaders that are capable of developing their interpersonal qualities such as Emotional Intelligence and empathy are most likely to be more effective in their leadership style. The authors also suggest that a PM leader that is capable of getting the most out of their team, will also deliver better projects, thus ensuring a better overall efficiency and result for the project outcome.

Furthermore, this research gives also an insight into how empathy can be an interpersonal concept that is applied in PM leadership. It is important to state that the authors of this paper are not in full agreement in regards to the last two paragraphs in IPMA; the People skill in the Eye of Competence where it says; “to demonstrate empathy, it means to show interest and involvement with others and their wellbeing. ...emotions expressed or just experienced by others. ...relates and reacts to these emotions in a sympathetic or compassionate way. ...offer support, even when it is not asked for” (IPMA, 2015, p. 73).

As it is stressed above in IMPA (2015), empathy in project management is about tapping into sympathy or compassion and becoming emotionally involved in the other person or a team. In this study, the authors encourage PM leaders to use Applied Empathy in a conscious and professional way, without getting lost in their own feelings, and not take on other’s feelings, as emphasized in the PM model.
As has been stated, this explorative study’s findings have led the authors to create a definition of Applied Empathy that would be useful in project management leadership (Figure 17):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of Applied Empathy in Project Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Empathy is the ability to sense people's feelings in the moment, allowing the project leader to respond to a team member or a team - in a way that is congruent to the person's or team's emotions, without becoming so emotionally involved that judgment is affected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17. Definition of Applied Empathy as Proposed by Authors

The authors are here submitting the concept “Applied Empathy” which emphasizes on, how it could be a new interpersonal tool in project management. Subsequently, the authors of this paper encourage all PM leaders to achieve and develop their Applied Empathic skills in their professional settings.

To the best of author’s knowledge, the concept of Applied Empathy has not been defined as proposed (Figure 17), before in project leadership settings and is, therefore, an unexplored field in the profession of project management. Because of that, explorative research methods were used in this study in order to begin to understand the concept of Applied Empathy and to get a deeper understanding of the subject.

However, to improve this study and take it further, the question about Applied Empathy in PM leadership and in correlation to project outcome is an unexplored field. Researchers see there a new and interesting field to explore, for the future research in the profession of project management.

It is also apparent that Applied Empathy, as it pertains to PM leadership, needs to be studied more in the future.

Applied Empathy is not an easy tool to use. To us it, one needs to demonstrate courage to confront the arena of emotions, an arena that many are uncomfortable with. The authors hope that this study, will inspire PM leaders and encourage the profession of project management to continue to develop these tools and methods. Authors find it appropriate to end by quoting Brene Brown (2018):

*Dare to lead wholeheartedly with empathy through conversation and at the worst, if you fail at least fail while daring greatly.*
7. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Firstly, we want to thank our supervisor Helgi Sif Friðjónsdóttur Ph.D. for all her encouragement, support, feedback and the time she has contributed to this research.

We would also like to express our greatest gratitude to the five project leaders, that participated in the interviews and allowed us to gather data from their teams through the survey. This provided valuable data for our study.
Special thanks get David Brooks for proofreading our paper.
Our very special thanks go to our wonderful families, for their support, encouragement, understanding and endless patience during these two years of MPM studies and during our final effort in writing.
Special thanks go to Haukur Ingi Jónsson and Helgi Þór Ingason, our dear leaders and MPM professors for leading us during these last two years. Guðfinna Bjarnadóttir, Bob Digne, Ýr Gunnarsdóttir and many others of our teachers has also had a profound impact on our MPM studies and get many thanks for their valuable input.

Finally, we would like to thank our fellow MPM-2019 students for great companionship during these two years of our study. We did get through a lot of things together with enthusiasm, unity, and joy in our spirit that we will treasure for the years to come.
8. REFERENCES


De Mascia, S. (2012). *Project psychology: using psychological models and techniques to create a successful project / by Sharon De Mascia.* Farnham: Gower.


Roots of Empathy. Retrieved April 1, 2019, from https://rootsofempathy.org/


