

Influence of Empathetic Management on Unionization in the Workplace

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Abstract

Trust is the cornerstone of organizational relationships, rooted in the formation of empathy. Merriam-Webster defines empathy as the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing within their frame of reference or to place oneself in another's position. This thesis will analyze the prosocial behavior of managers and organizations and its effect on employees forming a union. This research will test how empathetic management can be integrated as a critical part of an organization to optimize and decrease the number of unions formed. The study will determine empathy's role in manager and organization leadership and employee unionization. Companies such as Amazon, Starbucks, and Google are rated as one of "Fortune's 500 Best Companies to Work For". However, the increasingly recent winning percentage of unions within top-rated companies proves to say otherwise. A literature review of these cases will explore whether empathy or lack thereof, has anything to do with this labor movement. Do managers or companies lacking empathy lead employees to form a union?

Introduction

With new graduates entering the workforce, there is often a fear of impressing the boss or getting along with senior coworkers. This paper will analyze undesirable work environments employees face in Fortune 500 companies, ultimately leading to increasing union formation. Over time, employees have found their voice with the number of union elections on the upward tick.

This thesis is important because managers or organizations should be more empathetic towards their employees by developing strong, peaceful, and justifiable institutions acknowledged by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It is highly impactful for

employees to see Fortune 500 organizations recognize sustainable development goals. This concept will be analyzed further throughout this paper.

To portray the image of empathetic management and unions, tables and figures will be implemented to show readers visually how the lack of empathy will lead employees to form a union. These tables and figures will focus on the treatment of individuals, the number of union elections, and the winning percentage of unions. All these variables exemplify how managers or companies who lack empathy will lead employees to form a union. With the percentage of union elections won steadily increasing, this follows the ideology that managers or companies who lack empathy will steer employees to create a labor movement.

All the variables concerning managers or companies who lack empathy will be examined, leading employees to form a union. The presence of empathetic management is crucial to show that employees are respected and valued within a company. Each manager and company have its strengths and weaknesses, but employees will feel undervalued with the lack of empathy in the workplace. As graduation approaches for young adults, they must see managers and companies who understand their frame of reference within the workplace.

Literature Review

Expectancy Theory

The Expectancy Theory of Motivation describes an employee's cognitive process to make choices that will lead to the best personal outcome (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Employees expect a level of effort will achieve the desired level of performance. Employees expect performance to lead to specific desired outcomes, such as rewards or benefits (Starke & Behling, 1975).

Furthermore, the Expectancy Theory explains how employees perform based on their expectations. For example, employees read their company's human resource pamphlet of standards and regulations and then apply their standards (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Factors that Affect Expectancy Theory

Motivation is a set of energetic forces that originates within and outside the employee, initiates work-related effort, and determines its direction, intensity, and persistence (Colquitt et al., 2019).

However, it is essential to note that individuals can have different motivations at the same level (Kollmann et al., 2020). For example, consider two students taking an accounting course—student A is taking it to gain knowledge for a CPA exam, and student B is taking the course as a requirement (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Upward influence refers to the attempt made by a subordinate or coworker to secure a desired response from a boss (Russell, 2019). Upward influence is essential in an organization because an individual's knowledge transfers from other employees, including the supervisor and direct reports (Colquitt et al., 2019). For example, an employee should find work that elevates the manager or supervisor. Upward influence is significant because it initiates critical thinking in the organization to take a fresh perspective or look at a task or decision (Moore et al., 2020).

By implementing upward influence and empathetic management, managerial effectiveness will allow for effective and stable relationships in which employees will encourage themselves and others (Moore et al., 2020). Empathy is the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another ("Empathy", 2023).

However, if the employer fails to learn its employees' motivations within the organization's social context, it could be costly and destructively work against the firm (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). For instance, it may lead to the formation of unions. Organizations may prevent the

formation of unions by creating a positive and creative environment rooted in empathy and intuitively establishing motivated employees (Brower, 2021).

Managers or organizations should be aware of the work environment's social context that drives employees' motivations and social behaviors when providing incentives in the negotiation process (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). In addition to motivation, factors such as self-efficiency, instrumentality, and valence shape an individual's expectancy (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Employees' expectations and standards should be higher than their boss's (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). If the expectancy theory is applied correctly, it takes the responsibility away from managers releasing stress and burden (Moore et al., 2020). For instance, an employee should cut out the intermediary and not email to ask what is expected of a task--instead, it should be up to the individual's job standards (Swain et al., 2020).

According to Brower, individuals setting their standards in an empathetic environment increases organizational innovation and learning (2021). For instance, 61% of employees reported that to develop innovative ideas, such as preprogrammed questions before a meeting challenging the whole organization to take a "fresh look" to maximize decisions (Brower, 2021).

Self-efficiency. Self-efficiency is an essential factor when referring to an individual's expectancy. Self-efficiency refers to the belief that one has the attributes and capabilities to execute a required task (Colquitt et al., 2019).

In addition, being knowledgeable about oneself will increase self-confidence and self-esteem regarding a task (Russell, 2019). The knowledge of one's efficiency is dictated by factors such as past experiences, observations, or emotional cues (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). For example, consider a free throw shot in basketball. An individual is highly likely to make it because of increased practice shots and close distance (Swain et al., 2020).

Instrumentality. Instrumentality is an individual's belief that specific outcomes will lead to attaining other outcomes (Starke & Behling, 1975).

In addition, instrumentality is a low level of trust or belief that meeting an objective will result in a desired outcome (Swain et al., 2020). Employees most likely need to perceive a high level of instrumentality in the workplace, and good performers will begin to expect rewards. They may look elsewhere if a company does not provide them (Colquitt et al., 2019). For example, it is likely for employees to trust they would receive a bonus for completing a project if a manager delivered on the action in prior years (Swain et al., 2020).

However, empathy may play a part in increasing instrumentality (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). For instance, 76% of employees experienced empathy from their managers, compared to 32% who experienced less empathy, reported feeling more engaged in their organization (Brower, 2021).

Valence. Valence refers to the degree to which an individual prefers outcomes associated with performance (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). According to Starke and Behling, two types of valences exist in Vlad Vroom's Expectancy Theory: (1) an individual's subjective perception that certain activities will lead to desired outcomes and (2) the outcomes viewed as desirable by the individual (1975).

Additionally, an individual's desirable outcomes foster extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018). Extrinsic motivation refers to controlled motivation depending on task performance, while intrinsic motivation is felt when task performance serves its reward (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Equity Theory

The Equity Theory of Motivation states that an individual's cognitive motivation is based on their output ratio to inputs compared to other workers' ratios (Greenberg, 1988). One motivator of the Equity Theory is trying to be fair (Swain et al., 2020). There are two critical factors when considering the equity theory: inputs and outputs (Greenberg, 1988). The equity theory suggests that individuals create a "mental ledger" of their inputs and outputs (Colquitt et al., 2019).

However, a "mental ledger" may expand the gap between employers and employees (Colquitt et al., 2019). For example, if inequity exists in an organization, employers may ask employees to reduce their output-to-input ratio (Swain et al., 2020).

Inputs of Equity Theory

The Equity Theory is based on the idea that individuals compare their inputs and outcomes to others to determine whether they are treated fairly (Colquitt et al., 2019). Inputs of the Equity Theory refer to things an employee does to help an organization achieve a goal ("Adams' Equity Theory...", n.d.). For instance, inputs such as training or education. Furthermore, inputs of the equity theory may be recognized as an element of equitable treatment within an organization (Greenberg, 1988). Inputs are essential because they add an employee's value to a task.

Furthermore, employees who feel they are being mistreated compared to others may take action to restore equity, such as forming a union (Swain et al., 2020).

In addition, a sense of inclusivity and fairness should be established within an organization because it will ensure the best levels of motivation and engagement between manager and employee ("Adam's Equity Theory...", n.d.). For example, 50% of employees with empathetic managers reported that their workplace was inclusive, compared to only 17% whose managers were less empathic (Brower, 2022).

Training. Training is a systematic effort by organizations to facilitate the learning of job-related knowledge and behavior (Colquitt et al., 2019). Training provides an incentive for people in the organization to learn more. Research shows that 40% of employees will leave their position in the first year if they do not receive the necessary job training (Bressler et al., 2019). Furthermore, companies with 100 to 500 employees provided only six minutes of manager training, compared to companies with less than 100 employees, which provided twelve minutes in six months (Bressler et al., 2019, as cited in Freifeld, 2018).

In addition, mental health plays a huge role in training and job quality. According to Brower, 67% of people are experiencing an increase in stress, 54% are mentally exhausted, and 20% are taking longer to finish tasks (2021). Managers or companies should assign daily mindfulness training to combat mental health because employees are likelier to report more helping behaviors over five days (Hafenbrack et al., 2020).

Some may argue that training is costly for organizations. More cost-effective methods for training are founded on soft tactics that depend on a manager's ability to identify an employee's motivation (Russell, 2019). For instance, there is a difference between an employee motivated to learn and working to get a salary (Colquitt et al., 2019). So, how do managers differentiate motivation in employees? Managers may isolate their employees with a task to get to know how an employee thinks, their commitment, or if they are trying to climb the ranks (Hafenbrack et al., 2020).

Education and Experience. Education is gaining knowledge through instruction, while experience is gaining knowledge through practical participation or observation.

Many managers and companies rely on an individual's education and experience to support their business for a superior rating (Bressler et al., 2019). For example, a recent survey of 50,000

employers found a desire for education and experience from potential candidates (“Education vs. experience...”, 2019).

However, companies may require a specific degree for a job description. Requiring a certain degree is a mistake because training a bachelor’s degree candidate is more cost-saving than hiring an individual with a master’s degree (Colquitt et al., 2019). Managers or companies should evaluate job descriptions semi-annually so employees can move to positions where they will shine best (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Additionally, the experience or education of an individual may not be as relevant as their creativity or adaptability for an organization. Managers should seek employees based on what they see in the future for the organization (Bressler et al., 2019). For example, managers or companies can recruit adaptable individuals by devising a questionnaire for potential candidates that asks them to come up with three or four ways to sell “X” (Bressler et al., 2019). If individuals can think on their feet and quickly devise a plan, they will most likely adapt to a speedy market.

Furthermore, while it is true that hard skills are essential to specific industries, managers or companies should seek soft skills in new employees, such as multitasking, prioritizing, and interpersonal strengths (“Education vs. experience...”, 2019).

Outputs of Equity Theory

The outputs of Equity Theory are broken down into two groups: tangible and intangible (Colquitt et al., 2019). Tangible outcomes are measurable such as benefits, pay, or commitment. Intangible outcomes include status, reputation, or job security.

In addition, the workplace environment is constantly evolving. Organizations must find ways to create work environments that satisfy the needs of their employees of different age groups

(Kollmann et al., 2020). According to Greenberg, employees feel satisfied when they feel that what they receive from a manager or company is deserved in proportion to what they give to the organization (1988).

Tangible Outcomes. Tangible outcomes are typically items managers or companies can measure, such as pay. The value of money is a powerful motivator in jobs. Many individuals view the value of money differently. For example, some employees see money as a means to express power and prestige, while others see money as a means of living (Kollmann et al., 2020). Furthermore, if employees know their payment will be temporary, they may need more motivation to sustain the same high-level performance (Greenberg, 1988).

However, pay or money may not be the most wanted or highest motivator within organizations (Colquitt et al., 2019). Benefits and perks are sought more than salary (Weir, 2018). For example, an organization offering a benefits package based on a point system where individuals choose what type of benefits they need or want (Kollmann et al., 2020). Furthermore, a benefits package based on a point system will give an employee ‘skin in the game,’ most likely making the individual feel valued and treated fairly (“Adam’s Equity Theory...”, n.d.).

Intangible Outcomes. Intangible outcomes are not measurable or things a manager or company cannot calculate on a spreadsheet. The intangible outcomes are more important because they empower employees and motivate them to perform at their best (Weir, 2018). Many managers and employees focus on tangible outcomes, such as benefits or pay.

However, transformational leaders are managers or companies who are agile and adaptable to a changing market or environment. Transformational leaders are individuals who manage change well. Companies should be more transformational to prevent unions (Colquitt et al., 2019). Transformational leaders tend to focus on intangible outcomes over tangible outcomes because

they seek to enhance the motivation and morale of employees while identifying changes needed in the organization (Bressler et al., 2019). For example, decentralized companies let each department and individual plan their goals to support the more major company initiatives (Weir, 2018). Furthermore, transformational leaders will heighten their employees' awareness of specific outcomes while increasing their confidence (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Status/Reputation. Of millennials, 26% say recognition motivates them to do their best work (Bressler et al., 2019). Employees who are 'status strivers' reflect a strong desire to obtain power and influence the company's structure to express their personality (Colquitt et al., 2019). One study found that personality is a reputation from outside the individual, mediated by the influence of individual differences on career success and satisfaction (Dietl & Blickle, 2017).

Emotional cues such as fear or anxiety can affect an employee's motivation and reputation. Emotional cues are feelings that boost confidence or create doubt about task accomplishment (Colquitt et al., 2019). Everyone is scared to death to find out they are not good enough, no matter how confident they seem. Furthermore, every manager and company could benefit from measuring the personality or reputation of its employees (Dietl & Blickle, 2017).

In addition, managers' and companies' status and reputations are paramount. According to Denise Wilkerson, the HIRE author with FIRE, candidates will remember how they were treated during the interview, impacting your and your company's reputations (Bressler et al., 2019).

Job security. Job security is rooted in seniority in most companies.

An employee who seeks job security most likely values freedom or autonomy. It is essential to note the meaning of freedom or autonomy within an organization. Essentially, autonomy does not exist in companies because, most of the time, employees are guided by managers or organizations (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Instead, an intangible outcome an employee should seek is growth. Growth means moving or leaning toward a direction forward. Furthermore, growth presents new business opportunities for employees and managers or companies (Bressler et al., 2019)

Additionally, access is essential in the context of growth. Access refers to an employee's exposure to important meetings or individuals (Dietl & Blickle, 2017). For instance, watching a crucial meeting means something to that employee for no cost, except maybe a cup of coffee (Colquitt et al., 2019).

However, managers or organizations should allow employees to gain better perspectives about the company in more cost-efficient ways to improve job security and growth (Dietl & Blickle, 2017). For instance, managers may implement team-building exercises that cross-train employees or may offer anonymous surveys before a monthly review comes out (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Empathetic Management

According to Martinovki, empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing and adopt an alternative perspective (2007). Trust refers to the willingness to be vulnerable to an authority based on positive expectations about the authority's actions and intentions (Colquitt et al., 2019). The involvement of trust rooted in the formation of empathy encourages collaborative behavior (Kalshoven et al., 2013). It may lead to a planned or desired outcome-seeking to maximize both parties and create a win-win relationship (Martinovki et al., 2007).

Some may argue that empathetic management is a problem. These individuals state that empathetic management is not a company policy, as empathy is an attribute between employee and manager (Colquitt et al., 2019).

However, empathy drives significant business results (Brower, 2021). Managers who develop empathy as a skill create an employee-centric work environment that transforms the organization's culture (Moore et al., 2020). For example, empathic accuracy mediates prosocial orientation and career satisfaction (Cote et al., 2011).

Empathy is necessary for an organization because employees experience multiple kinds of stress and expect the boss to be the expert (Brower, 2021). A manager who develops empathic leadership encourages collaborative ideas and autonomy (Moore et al., 2020). Collaborative ideas and autonomy lead to innovation and adaptability in a changing business environment (Kalshoven et al., 2013). For instance, in a study of 899 employees by Catalyst, 61%, compared to 13% of employees, reported they were more innovative with empathic leaders (Brower, 2021).

The perception of fairness also plays a role in empathetic management (Colquitt et al., 2019). Employee motivation will most likely suffer from those who do not feel valued or treated fairly (Swain et al., 2020).

Empathetic management shows employees how meaningful their work is to the organization. For instance, managers may offer an employee to walk to meet the Vice President of Finance, who gets the employee's report every month (Colquitt et al., 2019). Managers or companies implementing empathetic management create an environment or atmosphere where employees are acknowledged at every level (Dietl & Blickle, 2017).

According to Levinson, management by objectives is self-defeating and increases pressure on the individual (2003). Managers must learn how to manage effectively. For example, managers should be taught to manage the outcome rather than their employees (Colquitt et al., 2019).

A high level of empathetic management will encourage employees to be more courteous and helpful throughout the organization (Kalshoven et al., 2013). A pooled mutual advantage

between employees and organizations' is met when the employee's needs and the organization's requirements are synergistic (Levinson, 2003). According to Brower, managers or companies are the most successful when they consider others and when they, express their concerns or inquiries and listen to employee responses (2021).

Treatment of individuals

This thesis examines the treatment of employees in Fortune 500 companies to discover the reason behind increasing union booms. Managers should treat their employees under ethical leadership, which includes being concerned for others, allowing voice, and demonstrating consistency and integrity (Kalshoven et al., 2013).

Managers and companies need to feel comfortable with different employees—for instance, age or skill levels, not necessarily race or ethnicity (Colquitt et al., 2019). For example, in a 20-item sub-scalable Mayor-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), managers' and companies' empathic accuracy and agreeableness in power conditions were optimistic (Cote et al., 2011). A positive relationship where managers learn how to influence and treat their employees in all directions, becoming well-rounded leaders (Russell, 2019).

Additionally, employers are not allowed to retaliate against employees who decide to join or form a union. According to the Department of Labor, employers cannot cut wages or fire employees for unionization efforts (2023). Employees can file an unfair labor practice charge alleging their employer violated the labor law (“National Labor Relations Board”, 2023).

A recent study showed that in two out of every five organizing campaigns, employers are charged with engaging in unfair labor practices and retaliating against pro-union employees in one out of five campaigns (“U.S. Department of Labor”, 2023). Furthermore, federal labor officials have stepped up legal challenges accusing high-profile employers of unfair labor

practices (Hsu & Selyukh, 2022). High-profile employers like Amazon and Starbucks have denied accusations (Logan, 2022).

Amazon. Amazon, one of the world's largest employers, has faced criticism for its treatment of employees. According to Merriam-Webster, unionization refers to uniting or joining two or more things into one ("Union", 2023).

Amazon has been accused of violating multiple labor laws and using aggressive tactics to prevent its employees from unionizing (Scheiber, 2023). These violations range from unsafe working conditions to anti-union practices (Logan, 2021). The issue of Amazon's treatment of employees remains a highly contentious and polarizing issue as high-profile unionization drives steadily increase. Proponents of unionization argue that employees deserve better treatment and more representation in the workplace (Kantor & Weise, 2022). At the same time, opponents argue that unionization could harm a company's competitiveness and hurt employees in the long term (O'Brien, 2022). Despite opinions, in recent years, there have been several attempts by Amazon employees to unionize.

The first notable effort of Amazon employees took place in early 2021 in Bessemer, Alabama (Logan, 2021). Some Amazon workers have accused the company of unfair labor practices, such as anti-union practices. Anti-union practices include illegally threatening to hold wages and benefit increases if an employee chose to unionize and promised programs to subsidize educational expenses if an employee did not choose to unionize (Scheiber, 2023). Amazon employees sought to form a union with the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU) (O'Brien, 2022). The vote ultimately failed, with 1,798 workers voting against unionization and 791 employees voting in favor (Logan, 2021).

However, RWDSU challenged the results claiming the company has engaged in anti-union tactics and that the votes should be overturned (Scheiber, 2023). The National Labor Relations Board brought attention to the matter by holding hearings but rejected the RWDSU's challenge in April 2021 (Weise & Scheiber, 2022).

Another Amazon warehouse, known as JFK8, located on Staten Island, NY, followed Alabama with a landmark win for its employees. The warehouse has more than 8,300 workers, 2,654 of whom cast votes to be represented by a union and 2,131 against, giving the union a win by more than 10% (Weise & Scheiber, 2022). In weeks before the elections, Amazon summoned employees to an anti-union meeting to emphasize the costs of union dues and threatened workers that they might end up worse off under a union (Scheiber, 2023). The treatment of Amazon employees caused the company to have high turnover rates (O'Brien, 2022).

The result is a milestone for Amazon employees and the broader labor movement in the United States. It is the first union in the tech giant's twenty-seven-year history (Weise & Scheiber, 2022). The union vote can upend how Amazon, the country's second-largest private employer, engages with some members of its vast workforce (Scheiber, 2022). President Biden has also spoken out about unionization and is glad to see workers ensure their voices are heard (O'Brien, 2022).

Starbucks. Starbucks, an international coffee retailer, has one of many companies under the microscope as its employees have sought to unionize. Unionization typically arises when employees do not feel their employer treats them fairly. Some Starbucks employees have reported feeling overworked, underpaid, and lacking job security ("Starbucks Union...", 2022).

The pandemic was also a driving factor in the Starbucks campaign, where workers felt abandoned by management as the team was understaffed and did not have proper safety precautions (Logan, 2022).

The current Starbucks unionization movement began in Buffalo, New York, in December 2021, where employees have expressed concern about limited opportunities in the company, lack of benefits, and unpredictable scheduling practices (Maruf, 2021). Starbucks Workers United (SWU) has created economic and non-economic proposals alongside Starbucks Partners and Workers United Upstate. Some non-economic proposals include the right to organize without fear, seniority rights, and non-discrimination, while economic proposals include better compensation, such as a \$15 per hour starting wage (“Starbucks Union...”, 2022).

In response, the company ran multiple illegal anti-union efforts. The National Labor Relations Board found that Starbucks unlawfully fired union activists, spied on workers, and offered unlawful benefits to discourage unionization (Logan, 2023).

Additionally, employees see others succeed in forming a union and get the courage to form one. The company’s anti-union efforts did not discourage its workers, as more than 250 Starbucks stores are unionized (“Starbucks Union...”, 2022). For instance, following Buffalo, a Mesa, Arizona store union won by a 25-3 vote in one of the most conservative cities in America (Logan, 2022).

Some critics of the labor movement have pointed to the small size of Starbucks stores that make it easy to win elections (“Starbucks Union...”, 2022). While this may be true, more than 70% of National Labor Relations Board union elections won every year are in small units (Logan, 2023). Proponents of Starbucks' campaigns have argued that unionization provides

employees with a stronger voice and protects them from retaliation or discrimination (Logan, 2022).

Additionally, with the labor movement increasing, many investors in these companies may benefit. For example, unions generally help employees receive better benefits, which means fewer profits for the company (“Starbucks Union...”, 2022).

Google. Employees of Google, one of the largest technology companies, have decided to join the union boom after years of activism. Google employees are among the best-paid workers across America, with a median pay of \$258,708 (Needleman, 2021).

However, in January 2021, a group of Google employees formed the Alphabet Workers Union (AWU) (Cogner, 2021). Alphabet Workers Union comes from Google’s parent company and holds more than 600 employees with the support of Communications Workers of America (Allyn, 2021). The unionization effort at Google has gained momentum since 2018 when 20,000 employees worldwide staged a walkout to protest the company’s actions to protect sexual harassment perpetrators (Allyn, 2021).

In addition, employees also criticized Google’s controversial involvement with an AI Initiative known as Project Maven. Employees were critical of the company’s work with the Defense Department on Project Maven because the company planned to explore censored search engines for Chinese citizens (Cogner, 2021). According to Fung, Google employees stated that the company has collaborated with repressive governments, profited from ads by hate groups, and failed to make the changes necessary to retain people of color (2021).

Additionally, the Alphabet Workers Union quickly boomed after Google fired a Black researcher, Timnit Gebru, who examined the ethics of artificial intelligence and criticized the diversity efforts at Google (Needleman, 2021). Gebru’s firing erupted more than 2,600

employees to sign a public letter denouncing Google, who insisted Gebru was a resignation and sparked fury against top executives (Allyn, 2021). Furthermore, Google even fired some employees who raised their voices on the termination of Gebru and, in some cases, led to complaints to the National Labor Relations Board (Needleman, 2021). The National Labor Relations Board accused Google of breaking the law by firing two employees for organizing a labor movement in December 2021 (Fung, 2021).

Google employees state that the reasons behind their labor movement are to make the company acknowledge its societal role and reshape its culture (Cogner, 2021). According to Needleman, Google Union's primary goal is to have a voice in business and speak out on problems such as retaliatory firings (2021).

Unlike Amazon and Starbucks unions, the Alphabet Workers union is known as a "minority union" (Needleman, 2021). A minority union gives employees the right to organize without winning a formal vote before the National Labor Relations Board (Cogner, 2021). In addition, a minority union does not have the power to bargain and negotiate pay and benefits (Allyn, 2021).

However, after the Alphabet Workers Union staged rallies on both U.S. coasts, 5,000 workers of contract received a raise bringing wages up to \$15 per hour (Alba, 2023).

Union Elections

A labor union is a group of two or more employees who collectively join to advance efforts of wage, benefits, schedules, and other employment terms and conditions ("U.S. Department of Labor," 2023). Organized labor in the United States started in 1636 when a group of fishermen in Maine went on strike ("Starbucks union...", 2022). In the case of *Commonwealth v. Hunt*, labor won, making labor unions legal in 1842 ("Starbucks union...", 2022).

Additionally, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, making it a policy to encourage collective bargaining by protecting workers' complete freedom of association ("National Labor Relations Board", 2023). Furthermore, an employer can voluntarily recognize unions if enough workers indicate they want the union to negotiate on their behalf (Fung, 2021).

In the United States, unions are the primary way for groups of employees to bargain with their employer through an election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) (Lowery et al., 2022). Employee organizers collect signed cards or petitions from bargaining unit members. They can either follow: (1) a majority sign-up if their employer recognizes their union voluntarily or (2) a secret ballot representation election ("U.S. Department of Labor", 2023). Experts say the pandemic is the main factor that sparked the union election boom ("Starbucks Union...", 2022).

According to Russell, there is a growing trend in American companies of flattened organizational structures (2019). The remarkable success of unions in some of the most anti-union corporations has shown that young workers are taking the lead in the labor market (Logan, 2022).

Most of Generation Z has taken the lead in the labor market movement. For example, Kate Bronfenbrenner, Director of Labor Education Research at Cornell University, notes that Gen-Z employees have seen opportunities disappear for their generation and are afraid they will be worse off than their parents (Maurf, 2021). The desire for Gen-Z employees aged 18 to 29 is more prevalent than their older coworkers: 77% of full-time or part-time Gen-Z employees are either a member of a union or would join a union if it were available (Liedke, 2022).

The public has also grown supportive of unions. For example, 71% of Americans approve of unions and union campaigns, compared to 48% in 2010 (Maruf, 2021). Amazon, Starbucks, and Google campaigns have shown how vulnerable labor laws are (Logan, 2023).

Number of elections

The number of elections is an essential indicator of employee representation. Elections provide employees with a safeguard of rights to organize, engage in better working conditions, and choose whether to negotiate with their employer (“Recent election results”, 2023).

One measurement of union election is the number of elections filed under the National Labor Relations Board. Union elections certify or decertify a union as the bargaining representative of a group of employees is decided by a majority of votes (“National Labor Relations Board”, 2023). In analyzing the number of elections filed by groups of employees to the National Labor Relations Board, a study discovered that unions are steadily increasing over the past five years since the start of the pandemic (“Recent election results”, 2023). For example, there were 1,249 union elections in the fiscal year 2022—a 50% increase from the year before (Hsu & Selyukh, 2022).

According to Combs, the number of employees who joined unions due to National Labor Relations Board elections more than doubled from 2021 to 2022 (2023). Some may argue that union membership declined in 2020 to roughly 10% because of the declined labor income of more than 51% (“Starbucks union...”, 2022).

However, a recent study by the Pew Research Center found that over 16% of journalist employees are currently union members, and 41% would join one if it were available to them (Liedke, 2022). Furthermore, from 2020 to 2022, the number of workers organized due to

National Labor Relations Board elections increased from 72,177 to 75,290 individuals (Combs, 2023).

A solution to this aspect of unionization, which could also benefit the overall organizational structure, is for managers or companies to implement empathetic management for employees to feel understood and seen. Some companies found that empathy can be a powerful antidote to contribute to positive outcomes, as 62% of women of color have said they are unlikely to leave their companies when they feel respected and valued by their managers (Brower, 2021).

Winning percentage

The percentage of elections won by unions is a crucial indicator of organized labor unions across the United States. The National Labor Relations Board calculates the winning percentage of union elections. For example, in 2022, unions won 76% of 1,573 National Labor Relations Board elections—a statistical tie for the highest success rate in American history (Combs, 2023). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 14 million U.S. workers, or 10.3% of the American workforce, were union members in 2021 (“U.S. Department of Labor”, 2023).

In addition, of all wage and salary workers across the United States, 20.6% of employees in the utility industry belonged to unions—the highest unionization rate in the private sector last year (DeSilver, 2021).

Critics of organized labor movements may state that the number of union members continues to fall, and thus the percentage of elections won is lower. For instance, DeSilver states that there were 321,000 fewer union members than in 2019 compared to 2020 (2021).

However, the support for organized labor movements is spreading across the United States. To illustrate, 68% of Americans approve of unions, a level of support not seen since 1965 (Hsu & Selyukh, 2022). With a large percentage of American approval of organized labor movements,

more groups of employees will most likely follow in the footsteps of others. The overall employee labor movement of wage and salary workers increased as only 2.2% of the unionized workforce lost their jobs in 2020 due to the pandemic (DeSilver, 2021).

Civic Engagement

Managers should establish Goal Sixteen of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to accomplish this mission. Goal Sixteen is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies or institutions at all levels by providing access to justice and building effective and inclusive relationships at all levels (“17 goals to transform ...”, n.d.). Specifically, a target of Goal Sixteen is to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws or policies for sustainable development because a proportion of the population has reported feeling discriminated against or harassed in the workplace over the last twelve months (“17 goals to transform ...”, n.d.).

Managers or organizations understanding empathy in their institutional environment is crucial, showing its importance on employee productivity. For example, creating a work environment with a climate of empathic concern helps to stimulate courtesy and will increase ethical leadership (Kalshoven et al., 2013).

Empathetic action emphasizes actions that reduce corruption and strengthen global governance. Managers and companies who focus on learning to be on the receptive and interactive end of the relationship with employees to understand better their viewpoint are highly impactful in the workplace (Kalshoven et al., 2013).

Additionally, managers or companies who lead with empathy promote peaceful and inclusive societies because appreciating an employee’s view and engaging in a healthy debate builds a better solution (Brower, 2021). Furthermore, empathy provides access to an effective

organization where employees will remember their managers' or companies' peaceful and inclusive leadership at all levels (Colquitt et al., 2019).

Hypotheses

H1: Managers or companies lacking empathy will lead employees to form a union.

Method

Subjects

Companies that will be examined are organizations rated as Fortune 500 companies or America's Best Large Employers to work for. These companies have been chosen because the increasing acceptance of unions within these top-rated companies prove otherwise. The companies and their employees are all headquartered within the United States. In addition, all companies operate on an international scale.

Amazon

Amazon operates in the e-commerce industry by offering retail consumer goods. The company was ranked 375 out of 500 of America's Best Large Employers and has 1,608,000 employees ("Amazon", 2023). Amazon's net income was (\$27,000,000) ending December 31, 2022 ("Amazon Com Inc. February...", 2022). As of March 27, 2023, at 4 p.m., the share price closed at \$98.04 ("Amazon.com...", 2023).

Starbucks

Starbucks provides specialty coffee, food, and merchandise in the restaurant and retail industry. The company was ranked 282 out of 500 of America's Best Large Employers and has 245,000 employees ("Starbucks", 2023). According to the Securities and Exchange Commission, Starbucks Corporation's most recent 10-Q noted the company's total net revenue was \$87,132,000 ending January 1, 2023 ("Starbucks Corp. February...", 2023). As of March 27,

2023, at 4 p.m., the company’s share price closed at \$98.66 (“Starbucks Corporation (SBUX)”, 2023).

Google

Google provides tools and services in the computer software industry, such as software, search engines, and hardware products. The company was ranked 11 out of 500 of America’s Best Large Employers and has 156,500 employees (“Google”, 2023). According to the Securities and Exchange Commission, Google’s most recent 10-K noted the company’s revenue was \$282,836,000 ending December 31, 2022 (“Alphabet Inc. February...”, 2022). As of March 27, 2023, at 4 p.m., the company’s share price closed at \$103.06 (“Alphabet Inc. (GOOG)”, 2023).

Variables and Instruments

Variables

Variable 1: Empathetic Management. Empathetic management is leaders able to understand or feel what an employee is experiencing and adopt an alternative perspective (Martinovki et al., 2007).

Variable 2: Union Elections. This variable compares union wins to union losses. Furthermore, this variable analyzes the percentage of elections won by unions compared to the percentage of eligible workers organized.

Instruments & Hypotheses

Table 1: Components of Study

Table 1: Hypothesis, Variables, and Statistical Analysis				
Hypothesis	Variables		Hypotheses & Variable Relationships	Statistical Tests
	Empathetic Management (EM)	Union Elections (UE)		
H1: Managers or organizations lacking empathy will lead employees to form a union.	EM	UE	EM ≠ UE	correlation; regression; line charts
Adapted from: Rudestam, K.E. & Newton, R.R. (1992). <i>Surviving Your Dissertation</i> . Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc. page 138.				

Table 2: Hypothesis, Instruments, and Statistical Analysis

Table 2: Detail About Variables				
Data	Variables			
	Empathetic Management (EM)	Empathetic Management (EM)	Union Elections (UE)	Union Elections (UE)
Instrument / Survey	Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT)	Study-specific: Video Interview Survey	Union Winning Percentage	Recent Election Results
Author / Publisher	(Côté et al., 2011)	(Côté et al., 2011)	(Combs, 2023)	National Labor Relations Board
Type of data	Quantitative	Quantitative	Quantitative	Quantitative
Range of scores	20-item scalable score: 89 to 103 *Note: The average score is 100 and the standard deviation is 15.	Survey Scale: 1 (Disagree) to 7 (Agree)	Percentage: 20% to 80%	NLRB – This is an excellent source of recent election results. However, I may not have enough time to analyze all the raw data.
Adapted from: Rudestam, K.E. & Newton, R.R. (1992). <i>Surviving Your Dissertation</i> . Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc. page 140.				

Procedure

Procedure to Locate Journal Articles and Data

Journal Articles. The data has been collected from the Business Source Premier database since February 2023. Peer-reviewed journal articles filtered search results within the last fifteen years. Search terms such as empathy, unions, emotional intelligence, social behavior, and commitment were utilized. The articles were chosen within fifteen years to recognize the relationship between increasing win percentages of unions and organizations. The articles selected will benefit this research by comparing the effect of managers’ social and leadership behaviors on their employees-specifically, the treatment of individuals and unions within an organization. In addition, the connection between social behavior and the research’s variables will be identified.

Other Sources of Data. In addition, sources were gathered from Google and Google Scholar with similar search terms. The results from Google’s search engine relevant to this

research were U.S. Labor Department, Pew Research Center, the Securities and Exchange Commission, Harvard Business Review, Forbes, and Bloomberg.

These articles analyzed the relationship between empathetic management and the formation of unions in Fortune 500 companies such as Amazon, Starbucks, and Google. In addition, the treatment of individuals and unions in Fortune 500 companies was analyzed.

Statistical Methods to Present and Analyze the Data

After analyzing the data presented, tables and line charts depicting the correlations and regressions between empathetic management and union elections were developed.

Results

Treatment of Individuals

Table 3 contains data on participants' empathic accuracy across experimental conditions in a two-factorial design—power (high vs. low) and emotion (compassion vs. neutral). For example, participants in the higher power condition and compassion condition exhibited significantly higher empathic accuracy than participants in the neutral condition.

Table 3: Empathic Accuracy Across Experimental Conditions

Condition	High Power Condition		Lower Power Condition	
	M	SD	M	SD
Compassion	-2.36	0.69	-2.73	0.74
Neutral	-2.73	0.58	-2.60	0.72

Note. Less negative values represent higher empathic accuracy.

Source: Côté, et al. 2011

Table 4 contains data on the relationship between ethical or transformational leadership, moral awareness, and empathic concern. For example, transformational and ethical leadership are highly related.

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Ethical and Transformational Leadership

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Transformational leadership	3.66	0.44						
Ethical leadership	3.82	0.54	.75**					
Ethical leadership mean	3.64	0.3	.52**	.67**				
Moral awareness	3.52	0.39	.31**	.35**	.45**			
Empathic concern	3.88	0.27	.20**	0.07	0.07	.38**		
Altruism behavior	4.1	0.63	0.13	0.25**	.19**	0.11	.16*	
Courtesy	3.86	0.62	0.12	.20**	0.12	0.1	0.1	.45**

Note. N = 133. Moral awareness and empathic concern are workgroup levels.

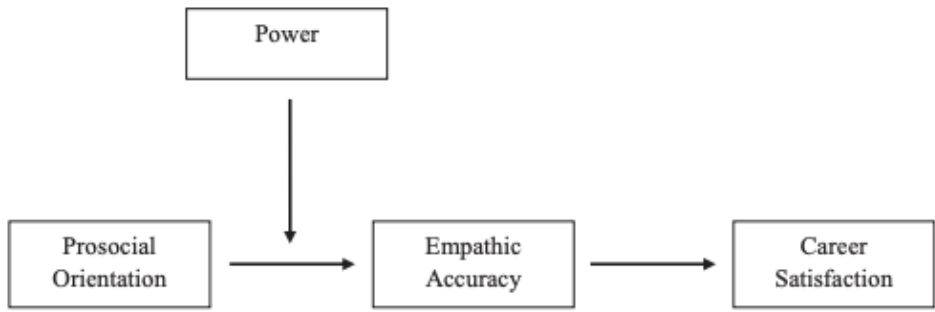
** p < .01; * p < .05

Source: Kalshoven et al., 2013

Figure 1 shows the association between prosocial orientation and power with an individual's career satisfaction through empathic accuracy. For example, empathic accuracy mediates the relationship between prosocial orientation and career satisfaction, and the relationship's strength depends on power.

Figure 1

Moderated mediation model of power



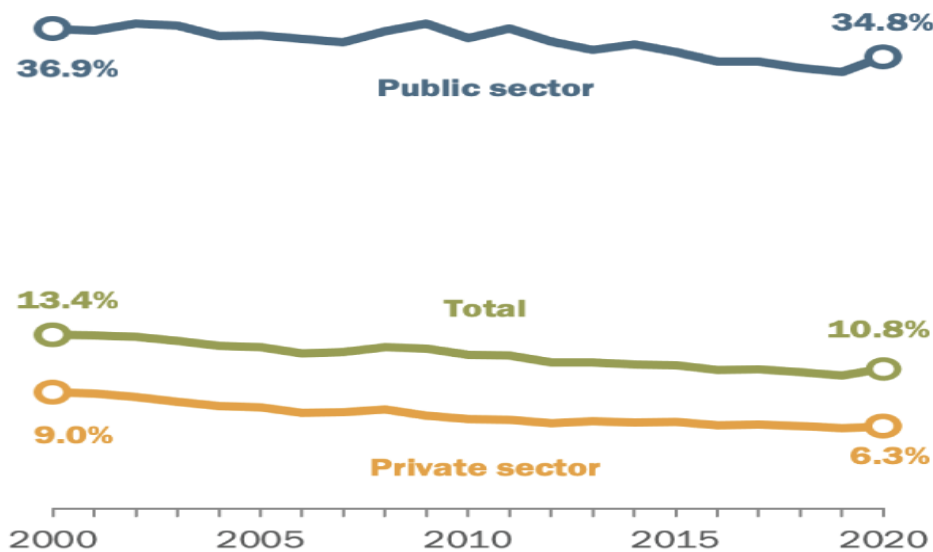
(Source: Cote et al., 2019)

Number of Elections

Figure 2 shows the percentage of wage and salary workers 16 and older who belong to a union from 2000 to 2020. For example, 10.8% of U.S. wage and salary workers reported being a part of a labor union in 2020.

Figure 2

Percentage of Wage and Salary Workers 16 and older who Belong to a Union

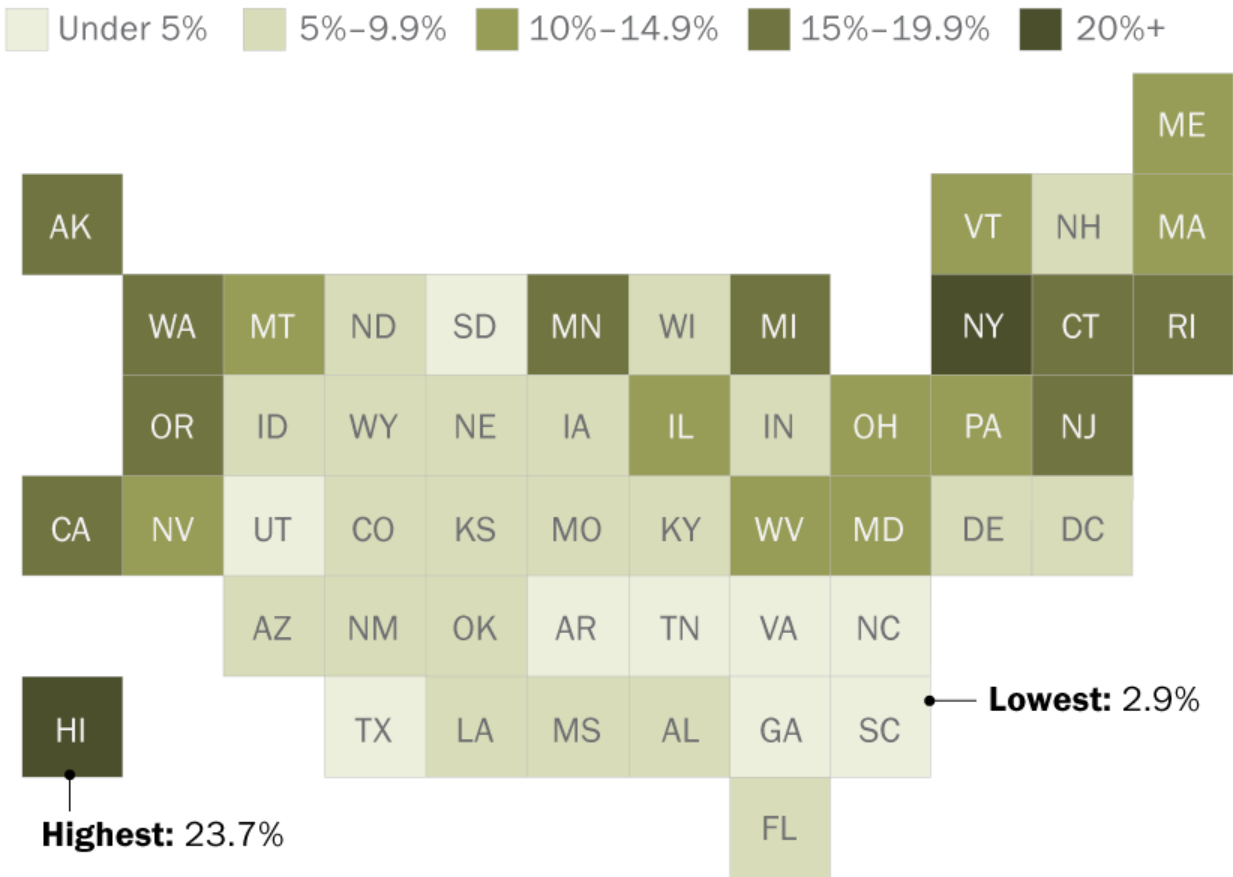


(Source: Pew Research Center)

Figure 3 shows the percentage of wage and salary workers 16 and older who belong to a union by state. For instance, Hawaii has the highest labor union percentage of 23.7%. By contrast, South Carolina has the lowest labor union percentage of 2.9%

Figure 3

States where Labor is Most and Least Unionized



(Source: Pew Research Center)

Table 5 shows the number of votes for and votes against unions in the tri-state area from January 2023 to April 2023. For example, in New York, there were 3,413 votes on unions. Of the 3,413 votes, 2,695 favored unions, and 718 were against unions.

Table 5: NLRB Closed Case Election Results January 2023-April 2023

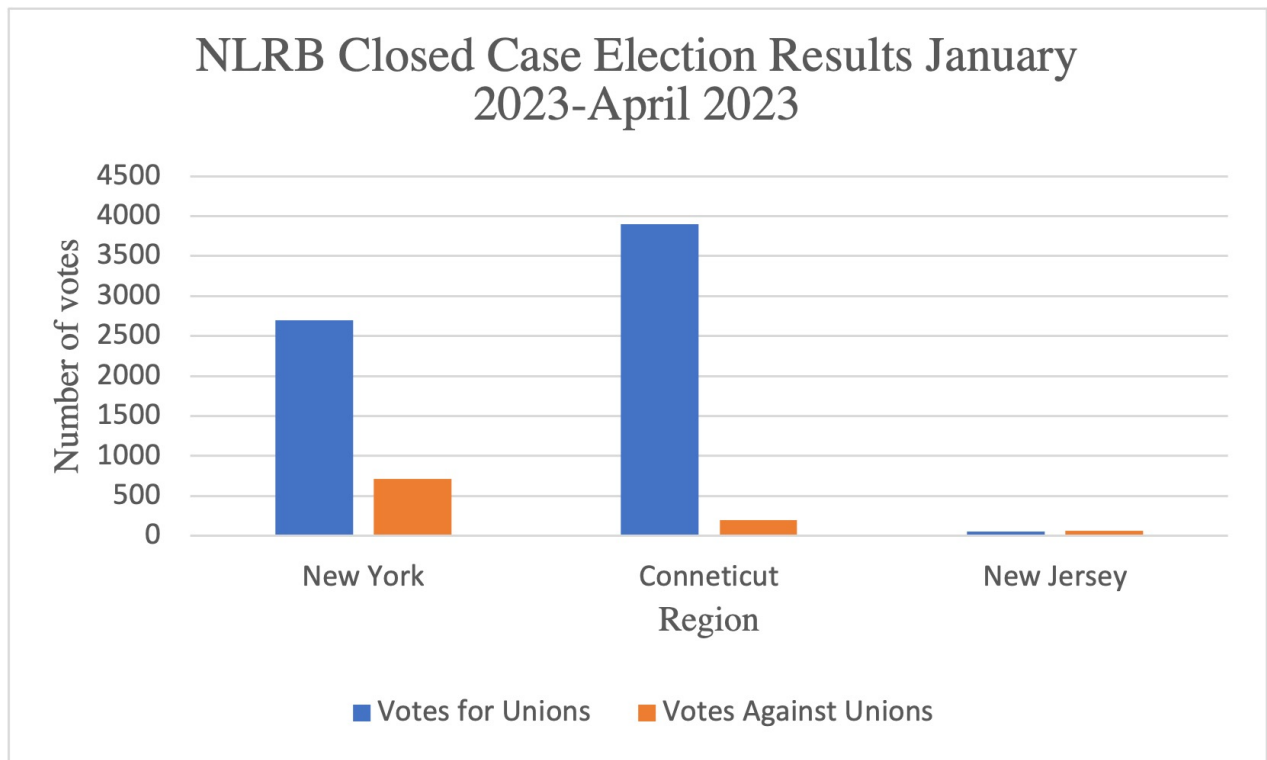
Region	Votes for Unions	Votes Against Unions	Total Votes
New York	2,695	718	3,413
Connecticut	3,896	199	4,095
New Jersey	56	63	119
Total	6,647	980	7,627

Source: National Labor Relations Board

Figure 4 shows the number of votes for and against unions in the tri-state area from January 2023 to April 2023. For example, New Jersey shows the lowest number of total votes.

Figure 4

NLRB Closed Case Election Results January 2023-April 2023

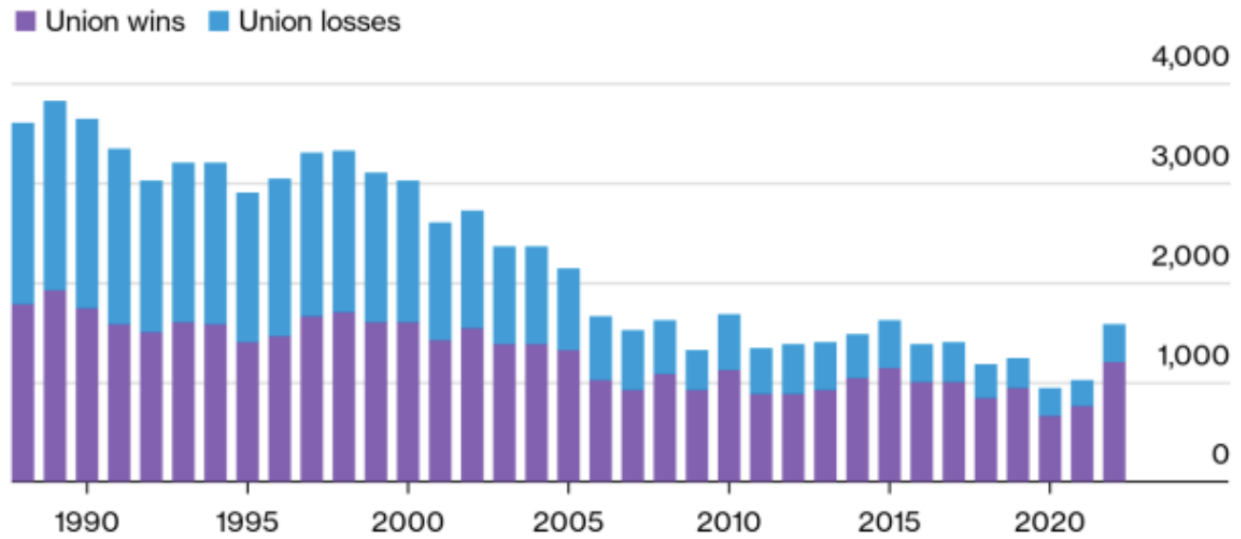


(Source: National Labor Relations Board)

Figure 5 shows the number of union wins and losses from 1988 to 2022. For example, the figure shows a noticeable increase in unionization from 1988 to 2022 and the most significant one-year increase in union wins to losses from 2021 to 2022.

Figure 5

NLRB Election Results by Union Win and Union Losses 1988-2022



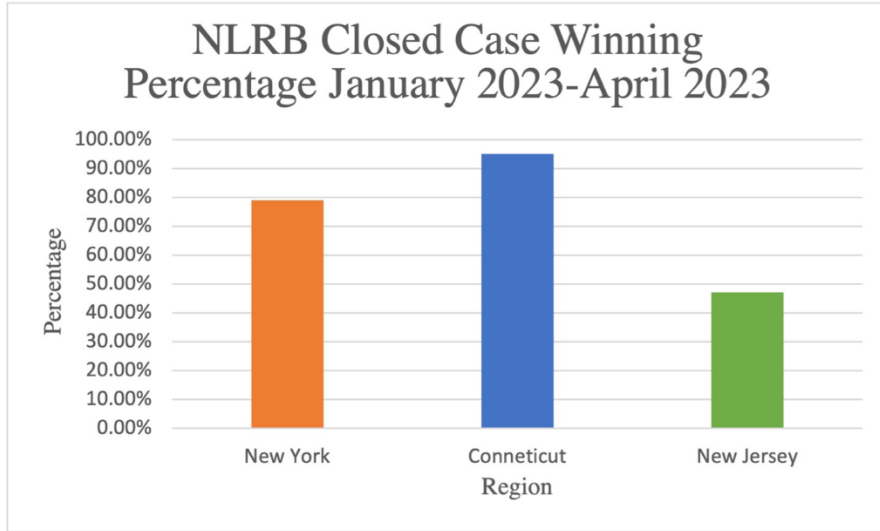
(Source: Bloomberg Law)

Winning Percentage

Figure 6 shows the winning percentage of unions in the New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey regions from January 2023 to April 2023. For example, Connecticut had a win percentage of 95%.

Figure 6

NLRB Closed Case Winning Percentage January 2023 to April 2023

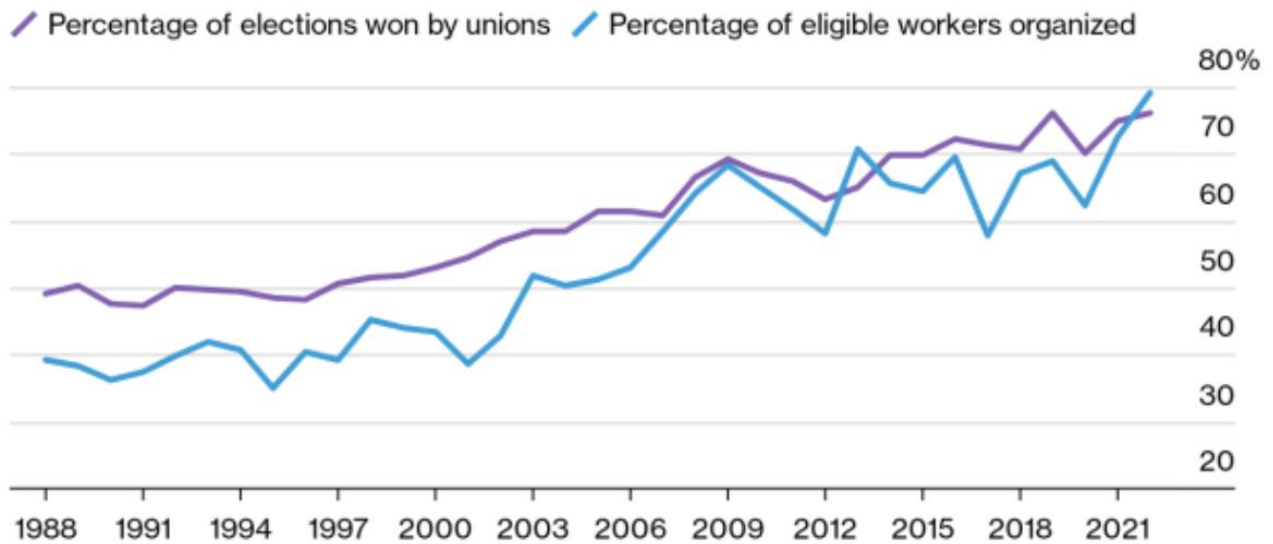


(Source: National Labor Relations Board)

Figure 7 shows the percentage of union wins and losses from 1988 to 2022. For example, in 2022, the figure shows that union wins exhibited 80% of eligible workers organized, and unions won 76% of NLRB elections.

Figure 7

Percentage of Labor Success in NLRB Elections 1988-2022



(Source: Bloomberg Law)

Discussion

The hypothesis analyzed the level of empathy of managers or companies. The hypothesis examines how empathetic management, or lack thereof, relates to employees forming a union.

The first variable in this thesis, empathetic management, was evaluated through empathic accuracy across high and low-power conditions in the workplace. The results in Table 3 indicate that compassionate managers exhibit higher empathic accuracy than neutral managers. While empathic accuracy in lower power conditions does not show a significant difference between compassion and neutral conditions, the data displays that managers in the compassion condition exhibit higher empathic accuracy than managers in the neutral condition. This data supports the hypothesis as a -2.36 mean of participants in the compassion condition compared to a -2.73 mean of those in the neutral condition, a 0.37 difference, have exhibited higher empathic accuracy. With a -2.73 and -2.60 mean in the neutral condition, the hypothesis remains that managers lacking empathy will lead employees to form a union. It is important to note that a less negative value represents a higher empathic accuracy.

Additionally, Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation between ethical and transformational leadership from individual and group levels. The data suggest that ethical leadership is related to empathic concern or courtesy with $r = .20$. This supports the hypothesis that managers or companies with empathic concern, or lack thereof, will affect employees to form an organized labor movement. Empathic concern is an enhancer of ethical leadership about courtesy. This supports the idea that employees react to managers and companies better when empathic concern and ethical leadership are present. With $r = .20$, this supports the hypothesis that managers or companies who are ethical leaders and share empathic concerns with employees will allow their workers to feel valued and understood.

Figure 1 represents the association between prosocial orientation and power with an individual's career satisfaction through empathic accuracy. In the model, empathic accuracy mediates the relationship between prosocial orientation and career satisfaction. The direction of the model displays that the relationship's strength depends on power. This relationship grows more positive as empathic accuracy or compassion increases, depicting that empathy increases job satisfaction and will not lead employees to form a union. This qualitative data supports the idea that managers or companies with empathy will make employees feel satisfied and will not likely form a union.

The second variable, union elections, consider the number of elections and the winning percentage. Figure 2 reveals that the data of public sector companies, such as Amazon, Starbucks, and Google, are increasingly rising from 2019 to 2020. Many employees felt abandoned during 2020 because of the workplace pandemic by management. This data supports the hypothesis because managers lacked empathy or left their employees, leading employees to form labor unions.

The data in Figure 3 reveals that the percentage of labor unions is higher in the states of the subjects examined in the thesis. States such as New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey are some of the states that contain the most labor unions. This data supports the hypothesis because the treatment of employees and lack of empathy has caused 15 to 20 plus percent of labor unionization in the states where the employees campaign the most against the subjects studied in this thesis. With the Northeast having the most labor unions, the relationship between states and labor unions also depicts the public political view of employment labor laws across the United States.

Table 5 reveals that the number of votes for unions is higher than the number of votes against unions when comparing closed-case election results in the tri-state area. The breakdown of regions for the number of union votes demonstrates a large gap between those who vote for unions and those who vote against unions. Approximately 87.15% voted in favor of unions, compared to 12.15% who voted against unions. With 7,627 total employees voting in a union election, 6,647 voting in favor is significantly high. With only 980 out of 7,627 votes being against a labor union, this supports the idea that managers who lack empathy will cause employees to form a union.

Figure 4 reveals that the number of votes in favor of unions is significantly higher when comparing the number of votes against unions. The data expresses that across the tri-state area, a higher number of votes are in favor of unions than votes against unions. This difference was the most significant in the state of Connecticut. Specifically, 95.14% of votes compared to 4.86%, a 90.28% difference between votes in favor versus against, have voted in favor of union formation in recent closed-case union elections. The hypothesis remains consistent: Managers or companies who lack empathy will lead employees to form a union.

The results in Figure 5 indicate that union wins are more likely to increase over the coming years than union losses. While the total number of National Labor Relations Board elections has decreased since 1990, the data display that over the years, a higher number of union wins, compared to losses, have accounted for the total number of NLRB elections. Precisely, in 2021, approximately 760 wins compared to about 2,000 wins in 2022, a 1,240 difference. This is the most significant increase in union representation in the last five years. The trend of increasing union representation in the previous five years keeps the hypothesis consistent that groups of

employees are forming unions. A 1,240 difference in union wins over one year supports the idea that managers who abandon or lack empathy for their employees will lead to union formation.

Figure 6 represents that the formation of unions has high success rates in the tri-state area. The data expresses that a high winning percentage was held between each region. While New Jersey has a lower win percentage than the other regions, the figure displays that recent National Labor Relations Board closed-case elections have high win percentages. Specifically, approximately 95% of Connecticut NLRB elections and about 79% of New York National Labor Relations Board elections have won the total number of elections in their respective regions. This data portion exemplifies that the number of employee unions is growing and supports the hypothesis that a lack of empathetic management will lead employees to form unions.

The results in Figure 7 indicate the percentage of National Labor Relations Board elections won by unions compared to the percentage of eligible workers organized from 1988 and ending in 2021. In that period, there is a clear trend of the percentage of elections won by unions increasing compared to the percentage of eligible workers organized. The data expresses that the percentage of eligible workers organized and the percentage of elections won by unions have been higher in recent years, specifically in the past five years. This union organizing performance grows to reach new heights as time progresses, supporting the hypothesis that current Fortune 500 managers or companies who lack empathy will lead employees to form a union.

Conclusions

General Conclusions

The report has explained the relationship between empathetic management and employees forming a union. The research has proposed that managers or companies who lack empathy will

lead employees to form a union. This study has identified the mistreatment of employees in Fortune 500 companies, including unsafe working conditions, sexual harassment, and unfair pay. The managers within Fortune 500 companies need more empathy when understanding their employees' needs and want surrounding employment terms and conditions. Labor unions have been on an upward tick in companies since 2020. Therefore, managers or companies lacking empathy will lead employees to form a union.

Implications for Practice

Fortune 500 companies need to be more conscious of how they treat their employees and what their employees expect from the company. The company needs to prioritize implementing empathetic management into their company's culture. The thesis states that empathetic management mediates prosocial orientation and employee career satisfaction. Recruiters for Fortune 500 companies should be more aware of empathy when hiring new individuals to create an inclusive and transparent organizational culture. Furthermore, companies should train their management team in empathetic management to increase awareness of employee values and strategies to determine each ideal.

Implications for Research

Researchers should analyze the various negotiation styles of managers and companies to determine which is the most or least effective in bargaining with employees during union elections. With labor unions on a steady uptick, companies have begun acknowledging the importance of employee voices and labor movements. However, there is still evident progress that needs to be made regarding how managers treat their employees in the workplace based on the research conducted in this paper. Therefore, further analyzing the negotiation approach managers and companies utilize when bargaining with group of employees, such as a cooperator

style, will be beneficial in addressing the number of union elections. Specifically, implementing empathetic management in the workplace they are highlighted in this paper.

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