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# Compassionate Leadership: As a Support to Enhance Employees' Core Self-Evaluation, Retention, and Subjective Career Success

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of compassionate leadership on the subjective career success of Saudi Arabian healthcare professionals (i.e., Doctors, nurses, surgeons, and administration), along with the mediating roles of core self-evaluation and employee retention. A purposive sampling technique was used to acquire the responses from the intended participants. A total of 415 valid responses were collected during three phases of data collection. Statistical tools (i.e., SPSS and SmartPLS4) were used for data analysis. For analysing data reliability, validity, and hypothesis testing, statistical analysis containing descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and standard deviation), correlation (Pearson correlation analysis), confirmatory composite analysis (i.e., Cronbach alpha, rho\_A, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and variance inflation factor) and structural equation modeling, were conducted. The findings highlighted that healthcare professionals are more likely to have job retention and feel successful when their leaders demonstrate these compassionate behaviors. These behaviors had a high capacity to positively influence core self-evaluation, which leads to overall subjective career success. Compassionate leadership behavior and effective employee core self-evaluation and retention strategies improved career success in healthcare organizations. Moreover, these measures are critical in creating strong social capital among Saudi employees. Boosting the subjective career success of healthcare employees involves a focus on compassionate leadership, core self-evaluation, and employee retention.

Compassionate Leadership (CL) is an evolving style that prioritizes empathy, care, and employee well-being (Benevene et al., 2022). Recent studies highlight its role in fostering positive work environments, employee development, and organizational performance (Ramachandran et al., 2023; Krause et al., 2023). CL is crucial in organizational psychology and management research, especially in the Saudi business and healthcare context, where high turnover and the need for positive work environments are challenges (Harris & Jones, 2023). CL addresses workplace suffering and instability, fostering a supportive environment, promoting innovation, and enhancing care quality (Evans, 2022).

The authors focus on various aspects, particularly the impact of CL on employee Core Self-Evaluation (CSE), which affects Employee Retention (ER) and Subjective Career Success (SCS). According to Hsieh et al. (2019), CSE reflects an individual's core assessments of their value, competence, and abilities at work, aligning with Judge et al.'s (2003) theory that self-evaluation influences attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes across life domains. The research underscores that higher CSE levels correlate with positive outcomes in employment, health, and relationships, underscoring the importance for organizations to understand factors influencing employee CSE to enhance well-being and performance (Krause et al., 2023).

It is additionally acknowledged that CL and ER constitute essential concerns in the workplace. CL and ER are critical workplace considerations. CL enhances organizational commitment and job satisfaction through empathy and support, thus improving ER (Dutton et al., 2014). Such leaders foster loyalty and belonging, significantly boosting retention rates (Jnaneswar & Sulphrey, 2021). Additionally, CL directly influences workers' SCS (Tietzort, 2021), impacting both SCS and organizational performance. SCS, as defined by Kundi et al. (2021), evaluates career success. According to Shuck et al. (2019), CL consistently enhances job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment by demonstrating empathy and supporting employees. This fosters greater job performance and professional success, as employees feel valued and supported by their leaders.

As a result, studying the relationship between CL, CSE, ER, and SCS offers valuable insights into enhancing employee well-being and organizational performance (Oruh et al., 2021; Shuck et al., 2019). Understanding how CL impacts these outcomes can aid Saudi businesses and healthcare providers in cultivating a more engaged and committed workforce. This research contributes to understanding CL strategies that prioritize employee needs and support their growth. It addresses significant factors using an empirically grounded model not previously explored, highlighting its importance and novelty in research.

Existing research on CL identifies several gaps that need further exploration. While most studies focus on healthcare (Chowdhury & Leenen, 2021; Salminen & Seppälä, 2022), the management field lacks sufficient research (Ramachandran et al., 2023), leaving room to explore CL's impact on business employee outcomes. Despite extensive research on CL's positive effects on engagement, culture, and performance (Benevene et al., 2022; Harris & Jones, 2023), gaps remain regarding its influence on employees' CSE, retention rates, and SCS. Few studies empirically examine CL's direct impact on specific psychological and career-related outcomes (Al-Harbi et al., 2020; Shuck et al., 2019).

Understanding how CL enhances CSE sheds light on its role in boosting employees' self-perception and confidence, potentially enhancing ER and SCS. Such insights are crucial for organizations aiming to enhance leadership practices for sustained employee development and

organizational resilience (Krause et al., 2023). This study aims to fill this gap through rigorous research across various organizational contexts, offering practical guidance for leadership and organizational effectiveness.

Saudi Vision 2030 aims to transform the country into a visionary, economically prosperous, and culturally engaging society. Chowdhury and Leenen (2021) argue that implementing CL can advance these goals in healthcare settings. In Saudi Arabia, the healthcare system prioritizes CL to enhance patient care by addressing physical, emotional, and social needs (Salminen & Seppälä, 2022). CL redefines healthcare excellence through care, compassion, integrity, engagement, collaboration, and competency among healthcare professionals like doctors and nurses, as emphasized in the Ministry of Health Strategy (2019-2023). It creates a supportive work environment in a demanding field, aiding professionals in managing stress and high workloads. In Saudi Arabia's collectivist culture, CL fosters belonging and community among healthcare teams, boosting engagement and retention (Ayyash et al., 2022). It supports employees' career success by offering growth opportunities, feedback, and work-life balance (Chen et al., 2022). CL improves patient outcomes, job satisfaction, and employee well-being, thereby enhancing retention and career satisfaction in Saudi healthcare.

## **Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development**

CL integrates compassion and emotional intelligence, seen as a dynamic, teachable social construct (Shuck et al., 2019). Social Exchange Theory (SET) suggests that supportive leaders boost employee performance, commitment, and loyalty (Blau, 2017). Key CL behaviors—accountability, authority, dignity, empathy, integrity, and presence—can be embedded in daily practices (Shuck et al., 2019). CL aligns with leadership models like transformational, servant, authentic, ethical, positive, relational, emotional intelligence, and participative leadership, emphasizing empathy, support, and follower well-being (Benevene et al., 2022; Harris & Jones, 2023).

Thus, theoretical frameworks suggest that compassion and CL impact employees' CSE, which includes self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control (Judge et al., 2003). CL fosters a supportive environment that enhances employees' self-worth and confidence, contributing to higher CSE (Shuck et al., 2019).

Moreover, employees with positive CSE engage in beneficial exchanges with their organization, resulting in mutual benefits that foster long-term commitment and retention (Afshan et al., 2022). ER provides employees with a stable environment where they develop their skills, gain experience, and progress in their careers. This results in employees reciprocating with loyalty and increased engagement, leading to a perception of career success (Ayyash et al., 2022).

Theoretical frameworks indicate that CL enhances employees' CSE, which includes self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control (Judge et al., 2003). Compassionate leaders create a supportive environment, boosting employees' self-worth and confidence leading to higher CSE (Shuck et al., 2019). CL promotes integrity, empathy, and authenticity, aligns with transformational leadership principles, and supports positive CSE outcomes.

CL, marked by empathy and support for employees, significantly impacts ER. Studies show it boosts satisfaction, engagement, and commitment (Poorkavoos, 2016; Shuck et al., 2019). By

fostering trust, collaboration, and psychological safety, CLs help retain top talent and reduce turnover. This leadership style benefits employees and enhances organizational success and resilience (Poorkavoos, 2016).

CL greatly influences SCS by creating a supportive and empathetic work environment. Research shows that this leadership style enhances employees' emotional well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, leading to a stronger SCS (Poorkavoos, 2016; Shuck et al., 2019). By promoting psychological safety, CLs reduce burnout and boost productivity (Ramachandran et al., 2023). They also improve interpersonal dynamics and trust within teams, positively affecting job performance and career fulfillment (Yildiz et al., 2023).

These findings highlight CL's essential role in advancing SCS and organizational effectiveness (Agrawal & Singh, 2022). Therefore, Leaders can use these instances as learning opportunities, allowing scholars and professionals to impact workplace dynamics, a less-explored area in HR and management. Shuck et al. (2019) note that the effects of leader-modeled compassion on workplace outcomes lack sufficient empirical research.

## Literature Review

### **Compassionate Leadership**

CL fosters well-being, ethical behavior, and a positive work environment (Dutton et al., 2014). Characterized by integrity, accountability, empathy, authenticity, and dignity (Shuck et al., 2019), CL values employee needs and contributions, promoting inclusion. Key behaviors include active listening, accepting diverse perspectives, showing empathy, and providing timely support (Lilius et al., 2011; West, 2021), which build a compassionate culture and boost team success and workplace morale (Shuck et al., 2019; West, 2021).

### **Dimensions of Compassionate Leadership**

Shuck et al. (2019) define CL as comprising accountability, authority, dignity, empathy, integrity, and presence. The mixed study (Shuck et al., 2019) and the latest quantitative study (Laurie, 2023) identify these behaviors as positively influencing individual and organizational outcomes. While CL likely enhances employee productivity, organizational performance, and workplace culture, further empirical research is needed to quantify its exact impact on dimensions such as ER and SCS.

CL promotes a positive workplace by emphasizing empathy and understanding rather than punitive measures for mistakes, fostering team loyalty and accountability (Lilius et al., 2011). It involves setting clear goals, monitoring progress, and providing feedback to support employee development and professional growth (Shuck et al., 2019). Authenticity is integral to CL, where leaders exhibit honesty and care, encouraging constructive dialogue and knowledge sharing (Oliveira et al., 2021). They demonstrate vulnerability, promote responsibility, and build relationships based on integrity, enhancing subordinates' emotional well-being (Oliveira et al., 2021). Ellis-Hill et al. (2022) explore Aristotle's link between dignity and nobility, sparking debate on whether dignity is inherent or earned through purposeful living (Walther, 2022). In CL, there is an emphasis on inclusivity, valuing everyone, and fostering acceptance (Shuck et al., 2019).

Guidi and Traversa (2021) define empathy as the ability to perceive and share emotions, which is crucial in CL for fostering employee warmth and compassion (Arghode et al., 2022).

This empathy is essential for navigating workplace challenges (Oliveira et al., 2021; Shuck et al., 2019). Integrity in CL includes transparency, fairness, and credibility, which are vital for earning trust and commitment from employees (Jung et al., 2020). Leaders uphold fairness and fulfill commitments despite competing demands (Zoghbi & Viera-Armas, 2019). Leaders' presence in CL involves mindfulness towards individuals and situations, enhancing social intelligence and active listening skills (Shuck et al., 2019). Reb et al. (2019) highlight how mindful leadership positively impacts employee performance, fostering engagement and collaboration within teams. Hence, based on the above review literature, the following hypotheses were constructed below:

**H1a:** Compassionate leadership has a direct relationship with accountability.

**H1b:** Compassionate leadership has a direct relationship with authenticity.

**H1c:** Compassionate leadership has a direct relationship with dignity.

**H1d:** Compassionate leadership has a direct relationship with empathy.

**H1e:** Compassionate leadership has a direct relationship with integrity.

**H1f:** Compassionate leadership has a direct relationship with presence.

### **Compassionate Leadership and Subjective Career Success**

Empirical research on the impact of CL on SCS is vital for understanding its workplace benefits. Studies like Evan (2022) and Yildiz et al. (2023) highlight CL's positive effects on SCS. CL significantly influences SCS and organizational performance by fostering understanding, empathy, and employee support (Tietsort, 2021; Shuck et al., 2019). Employees under CL feel valued and supported, leading to higher motivation and commitment (Dutton et al., 2014; Yildiz et al., 2023). This supportive environment encourages personal and professional growth, enhancing job performance and retention rates. Thus, fostering a CL can cultivate an environment conducive to SCS.

**H2:** Compassionate leadership directly and significantly impacts an employee's subjective career success.

### **Compassionate Leadership and Employee Retention**

CL and ER are two significant topics in the workplace. Research and expert opinions support the idea that CL reduces stress and increases job satisfaction, loyalty, dedication, and employee engagement, ultimately reducing employee attrition and low morale (Arokiasamy et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2016). An empirical study conducted by Benevene et al. (2022) emphasized compassion satisfaction as a job resource for teachers. The results showed that compassion satisfaction was strongly related to teachers' work engagement, which is a critical component of ER. This suggests that CL can enhance ER by fostering a supportive and engaged work environment.

Glover et al. (2023) observed that CL enhances talent retention and organizational performance, especially in adversity. Through prioritizing empathy and support, CL strengthens organizational commitment and job satisfaction, leading to higher retention rates (Dutton et al., 2014). CL cultivates loyalty and belonging, significantly boosting retention (Dutton et al., 2014; Jnaneswar & Sulphrey, 2021).



**H<sub>3</sub>:** Compassionate leadership directly and significantly impacts employee retention.

### **Compassionate Leadership and Core Self-Evaluation**

Ramachandran et al. (2023) outline six dimensions of CL, including empathy, openness, and self-compassion, which closely relate to an individual's CSE. CL holds increasing significance in organizational psychology and management, supported by empirical studies showing that CL enhances job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Shuck et al., 2019). Oliveira et al. (2021) explore how authentic leadership influences CSE, underscoring CL's role in achieving positive organizational outcomes. Higher CSE levels correlate with favorable results in work, health, and relationships (Booth et al., 2020), emphasizing the need for organizations to consider factors affecting employee well-being and performance (Hsieh et al., 2019; Saeed et al., 2019). Experiencing compassion elicits positive emotions, fostering self-improvement and psychological growth (Jnaneswar & Sulphay, 2021), while perceptions of authenticity, trustworthiness, and sincerity in leaders and colleagues enhance receptiveness to CL and cultivate psychological capital (Chu, 2016).

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Compassionate leadership has a direct and significant impact on core self-evaluation.

### **Core Self-Evaluation and Employee Retention**

CSE is a critical individual trait that significantly influences ER. Wang et al. (2021) indicate that CSE predicts workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, turnover intention, and job search outcomes. ER is crucial for organizational success, reflecting the ability to retain personnel long-term (Arokiasamy et al., 2022). High costs associated with employee turnover underscore the importance of ER (Kumar, 2022). Individuals with high CSE tend to be more satisfied, committed, and less inclined to leave voluntarily (Wang et al., 2021).

Harrel et al. (2021) suggest that CL improves ER by fostering a supportive environment. Higher CSE, encompassing beliefs about abilities and worth, encourages employees to stay with organizations that value compassion and empathy. Additionally, CSE can mitigate the negative effects of work stress, highlighting the need for organizations to consider CSE in hiring and management (Zhu & Zhang, 2021).

**H<sub>5</sub>:** Core self-evaluation has a direct and significant impact on employee retention.

### **Core Self-Evaluation and Subjective Career Success**

Xin and Li (2020) identified a positive relationship between job characteristics and occupational self-concept, which includes self-esteem and self-assessment of job qualifications, with SCS. Individuals with a strong occupational self-concept often have positive self-perceptions, increasing their likelihood of achieving SCS. CSE is an effective strategy and predictor for managing employees' SCS (Ganzach & Pazy, 2021; Lehtonen et al., 2021). SCS is the assessment of one's professional accomplishments, reflecting personal beliefs and values (Erogluer et al., 2020). Employees with high SCS feel their careers are thriving, experience greater job and career satisfaction, and are more likely to achieve their career goals (Jiang et al., 2021).

**H6:** Core self-evaluation directly and significantly impacts an employee's subjective career success.

### **Employee Retention and Subjective Career Success**

ER is crucial for organizational success and significantly impacts employees' SCS. Longer tenures are linked to higher SCS, which encompasses individuals' perceptions of their career achievements, personal growth, and job satisfaction (Erogluer et al., 2020). SCS is often defined by personal perceptions of career achievements rather than objective metrics like income or job title. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) suggests that beliefs and expectations about one's abilities and opportunities influence career choices and success (Ganzach & Pazy, 2021). High ER is strongly associated with SCS, as retained employees have more chances to develop skills, build relationships, and gain experience, leading to greater achievement and satisfaction (Lehtonen et al., 2021).

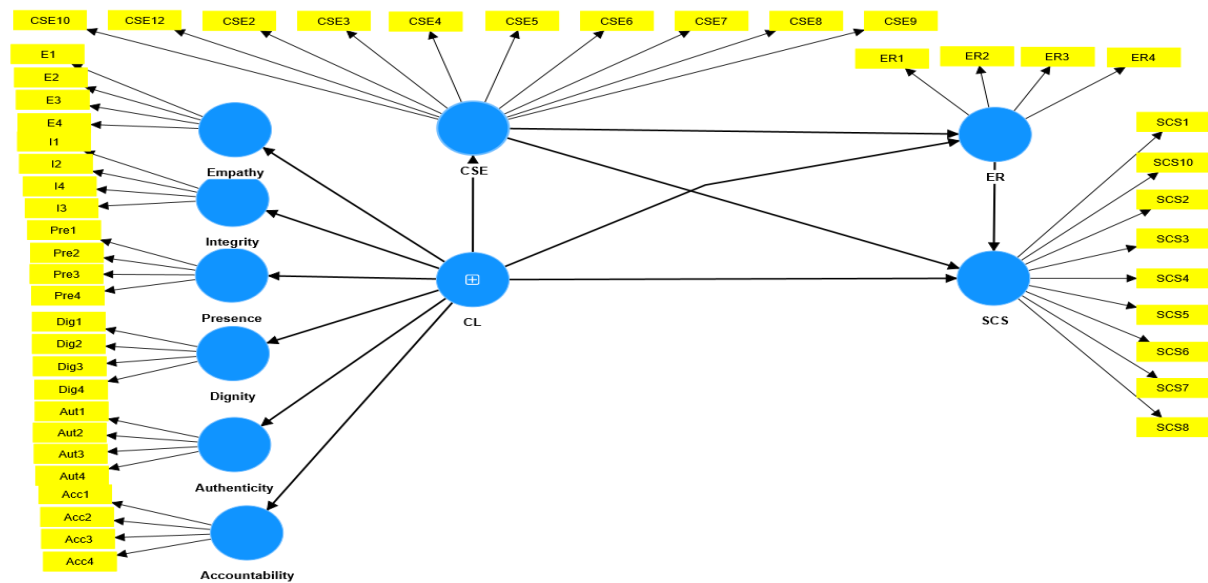
**H7:** Employee retention directly, positively, and significantly influences an employee's subjective career success.

### **Compassionate Leadership, Subjective Career Success, Core-Self Evaluation, and Employee Retention**

CL enhances employee SCS by fostering higher retention rates. Leaders demonstrating empathy, understanding, and kindness can boost employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and professional development (Dutton et al., 2014). Supported and valued employees experience greater SCS, achieving personal and professional goals and feeling pride in their contributions (Yildiz et al., 2023). Companies prioritizing CL can cultivate an employee-retention friendly workplace that promotes SCS. CL significantly affects employee SCS (Tietsort, 2021), influencing organizational performance. According to Shuck et al. (2019), CL consistently boosts employee satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment by fostering understanding, empathy, and support (Arghode et al., 2022). When employees perceive care and support from their leaders, they are more motivated and dedicated, leading to improved job performance and career success. Harrel et al. (2021) suggest CL improves ER and SCS. The studies above also indicate that CSE and ER mediate CL-SCS. Higher CSE, which includes beliefs about their abilities, worth, and potential, encourages employees to remain with an organization that values compassion and empathy in leadership (Harrel et al., 2021).

**H8:** The relationship between compassionate leadership and employees' subjective career success is sequentially mediated by core self-evaluation and employee retention.

Based on the literature review, the theoretical framework is designed in [Figure 1](#).

**Figure 1***Theoretical Framework***Method****Sampling**

Purposive sampling selected participants most likely to answer research questions usefully. This meets the study's goals and collects high-quality, useful data to answer the research question. This study includes doctors and nurses from Makkah, Jeddah, Madinah, Riyadh, and Dammam. Trained research assistants distributed 600 questionnaires. We distributed 120 questionnaires to two public and two private hospitals with the most beds in each city. Every hospital selected 15 doctors and 15 nurses with at least five years of experience.

Most participants were 36 to 45 years old ( $M = 35.89$ ,  $SD = 6.25$ ) and had six to fifteen years of experience ( $M = 13.45$ ,  $SD = 2.36$ ). Approximately 35.8% of respondents held a Bachelor's degree, 54.9% had a Master's degree, and 9.3% were diploma holders. 68.1% of the participants were male.

**Instruments**

Quantitative methods and a survey were used for the study. CL was assessed using Shuck et al.'s (2019) six-dimensional scale. Each subdimension has four items. Shuck et al. (2019) suggested assessing respondents' CL perceptions using a second-order construct. According to MacKenzie et al. (2011), higher-order measurements reflect the researcher's critical conceptual variations and effectively assess and test the construct. Researchers must consider nomological and criterion-related validity to assess formative measure credibility (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019). Removing a reflective item from a measurement model is less severe than removing a formative item. Rotated principal component factor analysis revealed six CL factors (Table 3). Empathy, integrity, presence, dignity, authenticity, and accountability can form respondents' CL perceptions. CL is second-order and composite (Shuck et al., 2019). Scales for CSE (12 items) (Taylor & Pattie, 2014), ER (4 items) (Mobley et al., 1978), and SCS (9 items) (Shockley et al., 2016) were adapted. Participants were advised to see their supervisor/manager as their leader when answering CL questions. A 5-point Likert scale was used to rate study participants' agreement or disagreement with each statement.



## Procedure

The researchers interviewed 40 doctors and nurses for four expert interviews and a pilot test. This survey was distributed in Arabic because the sample was Saudi healthcare practitioners. Therefore, Arabic-speaking researchers had to translate each statement from English. Back-translation ensured that questionnaire items were understood (Lochrie et al., 2019). The Arabic language professor translated a questionnaire into Arabic first. In the second stage, an English professor who could read and translate Arabic received the Arabic language questionnaire. Finally, a committee of researchers and professors of both languages was formed to resolve language issues. Based on consultant feedback, some questions have changed.

Saudi Arabia's healthcare sector is vital to its growth. The sector has reduced Saudi and non-Saudi unemployment by creating many jobs. Saudi Arabia's healthcare sector is growing fast and requires strong leadership. Healthcare organizations can foster collaboration, communication, and patient-centered care with CL. Investing in this research allows the Saudi healthcare sector to adapt to changing patient and practitioner needs. The data were collected in three phases (i.e., six months) to reduce participant burden, fatigue, measurement precision, data management, and methodological refinements, and it also helps researchers gather the most complete and accurate data. In the first phase, data for CL (regarding immediate supervisor) and demographics were collected. This phase yielded 569 questionnaire responses from 600 (response rate 94.8%). The second phase collected CSE and ER. Phase one respondents gave 504 responses (response rate 88.57%). The final phase collected SCS data. In the final phase, 443 first- and second-phase respondents responded (response rate 87.89%). The response rate dropped over six months as respondents left hospitals and lost interest. The researchers self-financed the study, so respondents received no incentives or rewards, reducing engagement. After removing outliers and checking for incompleteness, 415 responses were fit for analysis. Market research often uses large-scale surveys with sample sizes of over 384 (Saunders et al., 2020).

## Data Analysis

### Common Method Variance

The study participants stressed that they would remain anonymous to lower the probability of social desirability bias. Additionally, independent and dependent constructs were divided into separate sections when designing the questionnaire. The study examined the occurrence of Common Method Variation (CMV). Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess CMV (Gannon et al., 2019). The unrotated eigenvalue PCA solution identified five factors for the collected data. However, a single factor could explain 42.318% of the variance. In addition, we incorporated an unmeasured method factor in our structural framework (Liang et al., 2007). The average demonstrated variation was 68%, whereas the average method-based variation was 1.6% or a ratio of 43:1. Consequently, CMV is irrelevant to this investigation (Hair et al., 2021).

## Results

### Model-Data Fit Statistics

First, the technique of structural equation modeling was employed to analyze the CL dimension's structure. Second, a structural model should be developed to explore the association between CL, CSE, ER, and SCS. Especially the rotation method of PCA (Table 1)

was utilized to fit and compare the fit of alternative theoretical models of the CL dimensions.

Results shown in Table 1 explain that six clear dimensions existed on the CL scale. Compared models involve a correlated six-factor, unidimensional, bifactor, and bifactor models without each group factor (i.e., empathy, integrity, dignity, presence, authenticity, accountability). First, a correlated six-factor model was examined to specify if the proposed factors employed to manage scale construction accounted for the interdependency among the 24-item questionnaire. Second, a unidimensional model was examined to evaluate if a single underlying CL factor was described for the interrelationship among the items.

**Table 1**

*Rotated Component Matrix*

Items	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
E1	.70					
E2	.65					
E3	.64					
E4	.58					
Dig1		.57				
Dig2		.56				
Dig3		.50				
Dig4		.46				
I2			.74			
I1			.71			
I3			.68			
I4			.57			
Pre2				.73		
Pre3				.72		
Pre4				.65		
Pre1				.64		
Aut2					.74	
Aut1					.72	
Aut4					.70	
Aut3					.65	
Acc2						.78
Acc3						.67
Acc4						.55
Acc1						.54

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Model-data fit statistics for the theoretical CLS models tested in the study are shown in Table 2. The report found a marginally acceptable fit for the data with a six-factor model ( $\chi^2(253) = 1760.21$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .99, and RMSEA = .07). The CL dimensions can be differentiated because factor correlations are below .85 (.49-.64) (Taherdoost et al., 2022). Thus, the correlated factors model was a good instrument factor structure. After analyzing factor relationships, a one-dimensional model was used. The model did not fit the data well, with an RMSEA of .13. The data was fitted to a bifactor model after evaluating the correlated factors and unidimensional models. The model fit was satisfactory, with  $\chi^2(242) = 1124.19$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .98, and RMSEA = .06. The chi-square difference test showed a better fit to the data than the unidimensional model, with  $\Delta\chi^2(24) = 1862.14$ ,  $p_{\text{difference}} < .001$ . The complete bifactor model with the general (CL) factor was compared to models without a domain factor. The report found significant chi-square difference tests ( $ps < .001$ ), indicating that adding domain factors improved model-data fit. Thus, the fit indices supported a bifactor CLS model. In this model,

items load on a basic compassion factor and subsets on domain-specific factors that match the six proposed subscales.

**Table 2**

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of the Compassion Leadership Scale*

Model	$\chi^2$	df	p-value	CFI	RMSEA (90% CIs)	$\Delta\chi^2$	df <sub>Difference</sub>	p <sub>Difference</sub>
6-factor	1760.21	253	< .001	.99	.07 (.07–.08)			
Bifactor	1124.19	242	< .001	.98	.06 (.05–.06)			
Unidimensional	4373.54	258	< .001	.99	.13 (.13–.14)	1862.14	24	< .001
Without domain specific factor								
Empathy	1767.45	248	< .001	.99	.07 (.07–.08)	264.18	4	< .001
Integrity	1533.21	248	< .001	.99	.07 (.07–.08)	259.36	4	< .001
Presence	1613.72	248	< .001	.99	.08 (.08–.09)	272.45	4	< .001
Dignity	1451.18	248	< .001	.99	.07 (.07–.08)	243.73	4	< .001
Authenticity	1753.79	248	< .001	.99	.07 (.06–.07)	278.97	4	< .001
Accountability	2162.40	248	< .001	.99	.08 (.08–.09)	347.19	4	< .001

Note. Comparative fit index = CFI; Confidence intervals = CI; Degrees of freedom = df; Degree of freedom difference = df<sub>Difference</sub>; p-value difference = p<sub>Difference</sub>; Chi-square difference test statistics =  $\Delta\chi^2$ ; Root means square error of approximation = RMSEA.

### Confirmatory Composite Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized to evaluate structural models. This framework is relatively complex as it involves both reflective (i.e., CSE, ER, and SCS) and composite constructs (i.e., CL) (Ahn et al., 2018). First the reflective construct's reliability, validity, and multicollinearity were established. This was expanded to include six reflective aspects of CL: empathy (E\_CL), dignity (Dig\_CL), presence (Pre\_CL), integrity (I\_CL), authenticity (Aut\_CL), and accountability (Acc\_CL). According to Shuck et al. (2019), CL was determined as the composite and second-order construct in the second stage by evaluating its related dimensions. The associated criteria assessed CL as a composite and second-order construct. To conduct data analysis, Smart PLS 4 was used (Ringle et al., 2022).

For each construct, the item's outer loading is shown in Table 3. Following this, the validity and reliability of the reflective measurement models were evaluated. Table 3 shows the results of CCA by conducting Cronbach alpha (CA), rho\_A, composite reliability (CR), and AVE (Gannon et al., 2019). To establish the loadings, convergent validity, and reliability, values of loading, CR, CA, rho\_A, and AVE must exceed .40, .70, .70, .70, and .50, respectively (Hair et al., 2021). This verifies that all questionnaire items have high inter-scale correlations that adhere to the criteria for convergent validity. Variance inflation factor was performed to assess the multicollinearity of the items. The VIF values in Table 3 remain acceptable (< 5), indicating no multicollinearity issue with the data.

CL as a second-order composite construct was evaluated during the second phase of CCA. Three criteria must be considered to accomplish this. The composite construct must have significant outer weights, nomological validity, and multicollinearity, and VIF must be < 5 (Gannon et al., 2019). All VIF values in Table 3 show that they are all acceptable. The BCCI method calculated each outer weight's significance (.95). The nomological validity of the composite construct was also evaluated (Rasoolimanesh & Ali, 2018). The fit indices should be better after incorporating the composite construct (Henseler, 2017). For the saturated model, the SRMR after incorporating the composite second-order CL construct was .07 (Threshold = .08), indicating an acceptable nomological validity and model fit (Rasoolimanesh & Ali, 2018) (Table 7).

**Table 3**  
*Reflective and Composite Measurements Assessment*

Constructs	Items	Type	Loadings	CA	rho-A	CR	AVE	VIF
E-CL	E1-E4	Reflective	.59 - .73	.80	.81	.87	.62	1.55 - 1.72
I-CL	I1 - I4	Reflective	.55 - .69	.81	.83	.87	.63	1.51 - 1.87
Pre-CL	Pre1 - Pre4	Reflective	.58 - .72	.78	.79	.86	.61	1.41 - 1.66
Dig-CL	Dig1-Dig4	Reflective	.51 - .59	.78	.79	.86	.63	1.51-2.05
Aut-CL	Aut1 - Aut4	Reflective	.65 - .69	.82	.83	.88	.65	1.50 - 1.94
Acc-CL	Acc1 - Acc4	Reflective	.52 - .73	.76	.77	.85	.59	1.32 - 1.80
CSE	CSE2-CSE12	Reflective	.49 - .64	.77	.78	.83	.53	1.23- 1.52
ER	ER1 - ER4	Reflective	.70 - .85	.75	.77	.83	.59	1.24 - 1.96
SCS	SCS1- SCS10	Reflective	.51 - .77	.70	.71	.78	.52	1.10 -1.47
					BCCI (.95)			
	E_CL		.70		[.79, .76]			
	I_CL		.64		[.62, .69]			
CL	Pre-CL	Composite	.58		[.55, .60]			.69
	Dig_CL		.66		[.62, .68]			
	Aut_CL		.59		[.54, .62]			
	Acc_CL		.62		[.60, .69]			

The HTMT criteria were applied to determine discriminant validity (Table 4). All HTMT values are less than .90, establishing the discriminant validity of the scales used and demonstrating dissimilar traits for each scale. As a result, the bootstrap test confirms discriminant validity as the confidence intervals range from 2.5% to 97.5% and do not contain zero.

**Table 4**  
*Hetero-Trait Mono-Trait (HTMT) (Discriminant Analysis)*

	HTMT Criterion								
	Empathy	Integrity	Presence	Dignity	Authenticity	Accountability	CSE	ER	SCS
Emp									
Int	.686								
Pre	.694	.659							
Dig	.625	.716	.679						
Aut	.662	.621	.627	.691					
Acc	.678	.684	.648	.682	.704				
CSE	.663	.522	.665	.578	.506	.687			
ER	.598	.739	.729	.647	.615	.729	.735		
SCS	.676	.683	.754	.605	.596	.649	.652	.582	

Note. Empathy (Emp); Integrity (Int); Presence (Pre); Dignity (Dig); authenticity (Aut); Accountability (Acc); Core Self Evaluation (CSE); Employee Retention (ER); Subjective Career Success (SCS)

Mean, and standard deviation (Descriptive statistics) and Pearson correlation coefficients for dimensions of CL, CSE, ER, and SCS are shown in Table 5. Mean and standard deviation values for gender ( $M = 1.30$ ,  $SD = .46$ ) show that 69.1% of respondents include males. Moreover, descriptive values for age ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) show that most respondents are between 35-50 years old.

Correlation analyses were carried out using each construct's average values of the scale items. According to the values stated in Table 5, CL ( $r = .69$ ,  $p < .01$ ), CSE ( $r = .76$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and ER ( $r = .70$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are all significantly and positively correlated with SCS. Following the recommendation of Gannon et al. (2019), the correlation between CL dimensions (i.e., dignity, empathy, presence, integrity, authenticity, and accountability) and SCS was also assessed (Table 5). The results indicate a strong correlation between all dimensions of CL and SCS.

**Table 5**  
*Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Analysis*

	Descriptive Statistics		Pearson Correlations Analysis									
	Mean	SD	Emp	Int	Pre	Dig	Aut	Acc	CL	CSE	ER	SCS
Gen	1.31	.44										
Age	4.16	1.57										
Exp	3.88	1.44										
Edu	1.82	.55										
Emp	4.24	.45	1									
Int	4.30	.47	.63**	1								
Pre	4.31	.44	.55**	.51**	1							
Dig	4.42	.43	.65**	.57**	.53**	1						
Aut	4.36	.48	.53**	.50**	.50**	.55**	1					
Acc	4.31	.45	.61**	.54**	.49**	.52**	.55**	1				
CL	4.33	.37	.82**	.81**	.77**	.81**	.75**	.76**	1			
CSE	4.29	.31	.67**	.63**	.65**	.67**	.63**	.67**	.82**	1		
ER	4.36	.34	.47**	.50**	.49**	.49**	.42**	.48**	.59**	.68**	1	
SCS	4.28	.27	.56**	.56**	.51**	.57**	.50**	.59**	.69**	.77**	.70**	1

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

**Structural Model Assessment**

Table 6 and Figure 2 shows the hypothesis assessment results. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) processes were utilized to examine the structure of the CL factor and, afterward, a structural model of the association among CL, CSE, ER, and SCS.

Table 6 provides the results of the hypothesis evaluation. The H<sub>1</sub> explores the influence of actual CL behavior on the dimensions of CL. CL strongly and directly influences all the dimensions. Among all the dimensions, empathy is more strongly influenced by CL ( $\beta = .84, p < .000$ ), whereas presence, as compared to other dimensions, has been weakly impacted by CL ( $\beta = .75, p < .000$ ). Hence, it is proven that H<sub>1a</sub>, H<sub>1b</sub>, H<sub>1c</sub>, H<sub>1d</sub>, H<sub>1e</sub>, and H<sub>1f</sub> are accepted. The results prove CL's direct, positive, and significant impact on SCS ( $\beta = .69, p < .000$ ). Thus, supporting H<sub>2</sub>. Moreover, the results support the effects of CL on ER ( $\beta = .55, p < .000$ ) and CSE ( $\beta = .82, p < .000$ ), hence providing proof for H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub>.

**Table 6**  
*Results of Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Direct / Indirect Effect	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	BCCI		Hypothesis Support
					2.50%	97.50%	
H <sub>1a</sub>	CL -> Acc	.77	29.45	.000	.72	.82	Supported
H <sub>1b</sub>	CL -> Aut	.76	22.23	.000	.69	.83	Supported
H <sub>1c</sub>	CL -> Dig	.80	32.82	.000	.74	.84	Supported
H <sub>1d</sub>	CL -> Emp	.84	42.48	.000	.79	.87	Supported
H <sub>1e</sub>	CL -> Int	.79	31.51	.000	.74	.84	Supported
H <sub>1f</sub>	CL -> Pre	.75	26.38	.000	.68	.79	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	CL -> SCS	.69	23.11	.000	.63	.75	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	CL -> ER	.55	9.45	.000	.41	.64	Supported
H <sub>4</sub>	CL -> CSE	.82	41.55	.000	.78	.85	Supported
H <sub>5</sub>	CSE -> ER	.56	6.44	.000	.40	.74	Supported
H <sub>6</sub>	CSE -> SCS	.57	7.53	.000	.43	.73	Supported
H <sub>7</sub>	ER -> SCS	.23	26.37	.000	.09	.36	Supported
H <sub>8</sub>	CL -> CSE -> ER ->SCS	.46	7.81	.000	.37	.62	Supported

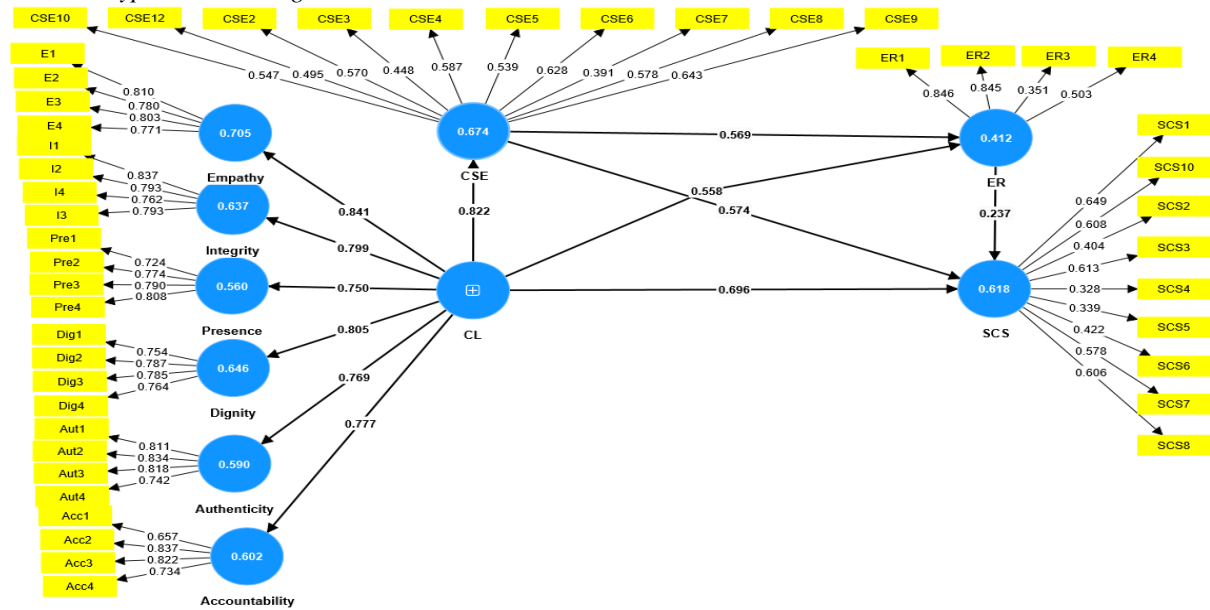
Note. Compassionate Leadership (CL); Core Self Evaluation (CSE); Employee Retention (ER); Subjective Career Success (SCS); Bias Corrected Confidence Interval (BCCI)

The results also support the effect of CSE on ER ( $\beta = .56, p < .000$ ) and SCS ( $\beta = .57, p < .000$ ), supporting H<sub>5</sub> and H<sub>6</sub>. Table 6 also emphasizes the direct influence of ER ( $\beta = .23, p < .001$ ) on SCS (Supporting H<sub>7</sub>). To analyze the indirect effect of CL, the product coefficient

approach was utilized. Bias corrected confidence interval method was used to assess the significance of the indirect effects (Gannon et al., 2019). The results highlighted a significant, positive, and indirect effect of CL on SCS via CSE and ER (H<sub>8</sub>) [ $\beta = .46, p < .001, BCCI = (.37, .62)$ ] (Supporting H<sub>8</sub>).

**Figure 2**

Results: Hypothesis Testing



**Model Evaluation**

A model's ability to predict outcomes should be evaluated primarily using one key target construct (CL). Based on the study by Hair et al. (2021), various criteria were used to predict and explain the variation in endogenous variables brought on by exogenous variables. SRMR (less than .08), NFI (greater than .90), and  $Q^2_{predict}$  (more than .00) are included. According to Shmueli et al. (2019), the endogenous variables (i.e., CL) have good  $Q^2_{predict}$  values for CSE ( $Q^2_{predict} = .67, Q^2_{effect} = Large$ ), ER ( $Q^2_{predict} = .35, Q^2_{effect} = Large$ ), and SCS ( $Q^2_{predict} = .48, Q^2_{effect} = Large$ ), demonstrating that the study model precisely captures the data and has a strong capability for prediction. In addition, the SRMR value (.07) and NFI value (.91) show that the model fit is good (see Table 7).

**Table 7**

Model Evaluation

Variables	SRMR	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adj</sub>	NFI	Q <sup>2</sup> <sub>Predict</sub>	Q <sup>2</sup> Effect
CL					
CSE	0.077	0.676	0.912	0.674	Large
ER		0.417		0.354	Large
SCS		0.623		0.481	Large

Note. Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR); Normed Fit Index (NFI);  $Q^2_{Predict}$  for Predictive Relevance

**Discussion**

The uniqueness of this research lies in its exploration of CL behaviors and the development of a measurement framework for these behaviors. The study identifies six specific CL behaviors (i.e., integrity, accountability, empathy, authenticity, presence, and dignity). The finding of H<sub>1a</sub> is consistent with the studies of Lilius et al. (2011) and Dutton et al. (2014), suggesting that CL creates a supportive environment that fosters accountability by empowering individuals and



setting clear expectations. The study confirms that through their empathy and understanding, CL instills a sense of responsibility in their teams. The study also provides strong support to H<sub>1b</sub> that CL is directly related to authenticity. This result aligns with the studies of Ramachandran et al. (2023), highlighting that CL promotes authenticity by encouraging honesty and self-awareness among their team members. Oliveira et al. (2021) also emphasize that CL fosters a culture of honesty, integrity, and self-awareness. The findings regarding the association between CL and dignity (H<sub>1c</sub>) were supported by Ellis-Hill et al. (2022). The study indicates that CL emphasizes the intrinsic worth of each employee, fostering respect and inclusion. Walther (2022) also emphasized that CL promotes the dignity and value of every organizational employee. The hypothesis (H<sub>1d</sub>) findings provide strong evidence on the relationship between CL and empathy. Guidi and Traversa (2021) highlight that empathy is crucial to CL. It is crucial for recognizing and addressing the emotional needs of employees. CL, who shows empathy, can better support their teams and create a positive work environment. The hypothesis (H<sub>1e</sub>) results provide evidence and support the relationship between CL and integrity. Shuck et al. (2019) and Jung et al. (2020) specify that integrity is foundational to CL. Leaders having integrity inspire trust and credibility, which are essential for a positive organizational culture. The findings demonstrate that a leader's presence, through mindfulness and attentiveness, significantly enhances employee engagement and performance (H<sub>1f</sub>). Shuck et al. (2019) suggest that a CL's presence fosters positive engagement and improved collaboration between employees and leaders.

The results of the second hypothesis show that CL positively impacts employees' SCS. Tietsort (2021) and Shuck et al. (2019) indicated that CL enhances career success through increased satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment. Employees who perceive their leaders as compassionate are more likely to experience career success and job satisfaction. The study strongly supports CL's impact on ER (H<sub>3</sub>). Arokiasamy et al. (2022) and Dutton et al. (2014) emphasized that focusing on the impact of CL reduces stress, increases job satisfaction, and fosters loyalty and retention among employees. CL creates an environment where employees feel valued and are more likely to stay with the organization.

The study strongly supports the significant influence of CL on CSE in healthcare employees in Saudi Arabia (H<sub>4</sub>). CL enhances employees' self-awareness and self-acceptance, leading to personal growth (Booth et al., 2020). Chu (2016) also indicates that employees who experience compassion from their leaders are more likely to develop a positive self-evaluation. Wang et al. (2021) also confirm the influence of CSE on ER (H<sub>5</sub>). The study also indicates that healthcare employees with high CSE are more satisfied with their jobs and less likely to leave. This contributes to higher retention rates as employees feel more confident and valued in their roles. The results suggest that leaders who display these compassionate actions have a greater chance of influencing healthcare professionals regarding their CSE, retaining employees, and ultimately contributing to SCS.

The study also explores CSE's strong and direct impact on SCS (H<sub>6</sub>). It stated that employees who have a positive self-assessment of their capabilities, worth, and competence are more likely to perceive their careers as successful. A positive job characteristic and occupational self-concept, which includes self-esteem and self-evaluation of job qualifications, lead to higher SCS (Xin & Li, 2020). Lehtonen et al. (2021) also highlight that SCS often reflects an individual's values and beliefs about their career achievements, encompassing job satisfaction

and career progression. Employees with high CSE tend to see their careers as thriving, experience greater contentment, and are more likely to achieve their career objectives. This finding specifies that employees who remain with an organization for a longer period tend to perceive higher levels of career success (H<sub>7</sub>). Moreover, Erogluer et al. (2020) and Lehtonen et al. (2021) also demonstrated that ER is crucial for organizational success and significantly impacts employees' SCS. Employees who stay longer within an organization have more opportunities to develop their skills, build professional relationships, and gain valuable experience, all of which contribute to a sense of career achievement and satisfaction.

The study also provides support for the indirect impact of CL on SCS through CSE and ER (H<sub>8</sub>). The findings confirm that CL significantly enhances career success by improving self-evaluation and retention rates. Harrel et al. (2021) and Dutton et al. (2014) recommend that CL indirectly enhances career success through its positive impact on CSE and ER. CL creates a supportive work environment that boosts employees' self-evaluation, leading to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This, in turn, reduces turnover and allows employees to build their careers within the organization, leading to higher SCS. CL facilitates CSE among healthcare professionals, particularly doctors and nurses.

### **Theoretical Implication**

SET holds that people only keep relationships that benefit them financially or socially (Perez, 2021). Leaders give employees resources and support in exchange for their commitment, loyalty, and performance in CL (Lanaj et al., 2023). The study examines CL, its dimensions (accountability, authenticity, dignity, empathy, integrity, and presence), and their effects on CSE, ER, and SCS. SET states that organizational relationships are based on resource and support exchanges (Blau, 2017). CL shows empathy and cares about employees. This positive behavior makes employees feel obligated to improve employee outcomes. Sinclair et al. (2021) state that CL fosters mutual respect and trust.

SET also states that employees respond to positive leader behaviors with more effort and engagement, improving career outcomes (Blau, 2017). CL fosters an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to succeed. This support boosts SCS because employees feel more accomplished and positive about their careers (Agrawal & Singh, 2022). Leadership that shows compassion to subordinates strengthens the emotional organizational bond, which increases ER (i.e., an exchange) (Wang et al., 2021). According to SET, leaders' positive behavior boosts employees' self-esteem and confidence (Afshan et al., 2022). CL improves CSE by meeting employees' psychological needs. Younas et al. (2023) say supportive leaders boost self-esteem and self-efficacy.

According to Lanaj et al. (2023), employees with higher self-evaluations feel more competent and valued, making them more likely to stay. Positive CSE increases job satisfaction and resilience, which boosts ER (Booth et al., 2020). High CSE makes employees feel more capable of achieving their career goals, which boosts career satisfaction and success (Gurbuz et al., 2021).

Employees receive longer tenure and more career advancement and development opportunities from the organization. Long-term employees have higher SCS due to experience and organizational support (Kauffeld & Spurk, 2022). SET shows that CL improves employees' CSE, ER, and SCS beyond direct effects. Chen et al. (2022) and Afshan et al. (2022) show that

supportive leadership practices improve career outcomes by improving employee well-being and organizational commitment. A positive feedback loop in which leaders support and value employees can boost engagement, performance, and retention (Chen et al., 2022). CSE mediates CL-social exchange by affecting self-worth and competence (Khattak et al., 2022).

### **Practical Implication**

Targeted leadership development programs are the main way to develop CL. Potential leaders should attend regular workshops and seminars on emotional intelligence, empathy, active listening, and conflict resolution. Mentorship programs can help experienced leaders develop compassion and mentor new leaders. Continuous leadership and management education with a compassion focus can enhance these practices.

Healthcare workers under CL have higher job satisfaction and SCS. This suggests that when leaders show genuine care and concern for their employees, it boosts morale and promotes professional fulfillment. Employees thrive in such environments, increasing motivation and productivity. CL also improves CSE, which may boost employee self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional stability. This psychological boost can reduce stress and burnout, making workers healthier and more resilient. The strong correlation between CL and ER emphasizes the importance of compassionate practices; employees who feel valued and supported are more loyal to their employers. For healthcare organizations to maintain high standards of care and service, loyalty improves organizational stability and continuity.

CL training can improve employee relations, morale, and organizational performance. The direct positive effect on ER suggests that CL should be a retention strategy component. Supportive and inclusive workplaces retain talented employees, reducing turnover and costs. Another important effect of CL is on patient care. Compassionate leaders motivate staff to improve patient care, patient satisfaction, and the organization's reputation. Creating a compassionate, authentic, and honest organizational culture can also boost productivity. An engaging, collaborative, and innovative workplace helps solve complex healthcare problems. Recognizing and rewarding SCS helps employees advance in their careers and develop professionally. CL's positive impact on CSE shows the need for holistic employee welfare programs that support mental and physical health. Such initiatives can reduce absenteeism and improve employee welfare, making the workforce more effective and resilient. With these initiatives, Saudi Arabian healthcare organizations can improve compassion, support, and efficiency. This approach improves employee job satisfaction, well-being, and career success and improves organizational outcomes like patient care, retention, and reputation.

### **Future Directions and Limitations**

This study highlights how CL, CSE, and ER enhance the social capital of Saudi Arabian employees. In multiple ways, future research can help us to comprehend this phenomenon. Future research suggests that CL improves task performance, contextual performance, innovation, and creativity. Future research could examine its effects on higher education, telecommunications, and tourism. The effectiveness of CL may depend on industry requirements. Secondly, CL indirectly influences SCS. Only CSE and ER mediate this investigation. Self-efficacy, job security, and employee performance may also serve as

mediators. Alternative boundary conditions may include individual (e.g., task performance, employability, and political skills) and organizational (organizational justice and support) constructs to comprehend CL and SCS.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study contributes to the literature on leadership and organizational behavior by examining the multifaceted impact of CL within Saudi healthcare organizations. The research supports that accountability, authenticity, dignity, empathy, integrity, and presence are the significant dimensions of CL that enhance key workplace attributes. These findings reinforce the importance of CL in fostering a positive and ethical work environment. The significant contribution of the study involves its explanation that CL directly improves CSE, ER, and SCS. By highlighting these direct effects, the research underscores how CL can enhance employees' perceptions of their career achievements and organizational loyalty, thus addressing gaps in the existing literature on leadership effectiveness. Moreover, the study reveals the mediating role of CSE in the relationship between CL and key employee outcomes (i.e., ER and SCS). The study also establishes a direct link between ER and SCS, signifying that longer tenure within an organization enhances career satisfaction. This study advances the understanding of CL by linking it to improved workplace attributes, CSE, ER, and SCS.

## Declarations

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