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**The Role of Empowering Leadership in Shaping Ethical Climate and Culture, Self-Aspects, and Team Effectiveness in Healthcare Institutions**

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**Abstract:** The primary aim of this research is to examine the role of ethical climate and culture, along with self-aspect, in understanding the relationship between perceived empowering leadership and team effectiveness in the healthcare context. The research explores the indirect influence of ethical climate and culture on the connection between empowering leadership and team effectiveness. Data were obtained from 795 healthcare professionals randomly selected for testing the research model developed according to quantitative research procedures. The study's main findings suggest a relationship between individuals' perceptions of empowering leadership style and their self, relational self, and collective self. Moreover, the study's findings support the idea that empowering leadership may foster the development of collective identity norms by encouraging individuals to assume greater roles within the organization. Empowering leadership enhanced team performance and significantly influenced ethical climate and culture.

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This leadership style may indirectly enhance team effectiveness by fostering ethical values and organizational culture. These findings provide important insights into understanding the complex interactions between leadership styles, individuals' self-aspects, and ethical climate and culture. The current study contributes to the development of more effective leadership, team performance, and leader-member interaction strategies, thereby fostering a more effective working environment in healthcare institutions.

**Keywords:** *Empowering Leadership, Team Effectiveness, Three Aspects of the Self (relational, individual, collective), Ethical Climate and Culture.*

## **Introduction**

Empowerment significantly boosts job performance by impacting key factors such as commitment, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction through leader-member exchange (Pacheco et al., 2023). Leaders also strive to empower by directing individuals' attention to strategic or operational goals, aiming to increase commitment to their work by recognizing its value. In the healthcare sector, where employee motivation can more strongly influence outcomes, the importance of employees feeling valued is even more emphasized. Integrating empowering leadership with ethical climate and culture in healthcare institutions can ensure that patients and employees benefit from healthcare services to the fullest and support the efficient delivery of healthcare services. Empowering leadership, which emphasizes the value individuals place on themselves and their identities, can lead the way in creating an ethical climate by demonstrating values such as integrity, fairness, and respect (Dey et al., 2022) and showing employees the importance of these values. Moreover, empowering leaders to support employee participation in decision-making can promote collaboration and foster an ethical culture. When this interaction is established, employees' self-definitions and relationships with one another will shape leadership style, ethical climate, and culture dynamics.

Self-aspects include how others perceive individuals in social interactions, how they are respected, how these processes change over time, and the effort to manage others' impressions of themselves. This relationship is valuable in framing individuals' behaviors within appropriate boundaries during socialization. Self-aspects involve various methods, such as tactical, strategic, defensive, or assertive approaches, through which individuals seek to influence others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding the self-presenter (Tyler & Adams, 2014). It encompasses various behavioral types based on personality traits and individual intentions, such as aggression, intimidation, exemplification, self-enhancement, entitlement, and making excuses, which may not be authentic (Hart et al., 2020). Individuals focus on increasing their self-esteem and shaping their social identity in their interactions with others (Harris & Orth, 2020; Willis et al., 2019). In this context, the primary motivation of this study is to understand the role and relationship of ethical climate and culture with self-aspects in the relationship between perceived empowering leadership style and team effectiveness among healthcare professionals.

## **Literature Review**

### **Empowering Leadership and Team Effectiveness**

Empowering leadership encompasses psychological and performance empowerment of employees (Cheong et al., 2019). This style can be explained by dimensions such as power sharing, motivation, and development support (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014a), increasing the meaningfulness of work, encouraging participation in decision-making processes, expressing confidence in high performance, and providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints (Ahearne et al., 2005).

To maximize a team's performance and effectiveness and to foster empowering leadership, it is crucial to lead by example, provide coaching, promote creativity and effective communication, build trust, encourage participation in decision-making, and share information (Lee et al., 2018; Rousseau & Aube, 2019; Kim et al., 2018). Empowering leadership is vital for improving access to resources, team efficiency, problem-solving ability, and goal-setting (Rousseau & Aube, 2019; Lisak et al., 2022). It creates a supportive environment that enhances team performance and innovation (Cui & Yu, 2021). Team initiative boosts productivity and engagement, while autonomy supports work motivation and well-being (Hassi et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2018). The relationship between empowering leadership and team effectiveness creates both a leader-team interaction and an impact that develops individuals (Smallfield et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2020).

### **Empowering Leadership, Team Effectiveness, Ethical Climate and Culture and Three Aspects of the Self**

Empowering leadership offers significant benefits, including improving employees' psychological well-being, enhancing their performance and creativity, fostering innovation in their work and social support in the workplace, and promoting positive attitudes and motivation. It also helps them tackle job-related challenges (Kim & Beehr, 2022; Alzahrani, 2020; Kim & Beehr, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Thun & Bakker, 2018). Empowering leadership primarily focuses on enabling team members to take responsibility for work organization and to make autonomous decisions (Mezentseva et al., 2023). Corporate ethical values and the perception that these values are essential can explain employees' helping behaviors within the organization. Additionally, ethical values influence employees' sense of belonging, highlighting keywords for leaders to create a corporate culture in which employees feel closely connected (Mitonga-Monga & Flotman, 2021). Thus, empowering leadership fosters collaboration by granting individuals authority and responsibilities, encouraging participation in organizational decisions, and increasing employees' commitment.

Self-aspects emerge as a concept that regulates interpersonal interactions, is associated with self-esteem, and indicates how individuals make sense of the world (Yu et al., 2022). Baumeister (1982) discusses two dimensions of self-aspect: displaying behaviors to please the crowd and constructing one's social self in line with self-realization goals. Jones and Pittman (1982) state that self-aspect allows individuals to emphasize their accomplishments (self-promotion), gain others' appreciation and display exemplary behavior (ingratiation and exemplification), gain power (intimidation), and seek help from others (supplication). The use of these aspects varies depending on an individual's sociodemographic characteristics, roles in social interactions, and personal goals (Yousef & Freh, 2020).

In this study, Sedikides and Brewer's (2001) framework of self-aspects serves as a model. Accordingly, self-aspect is based on three pillars: the individual self, the relational self, and the collective self. *The individual self* refers to characteristics and personality traits that distinguish individuals from others, taking into account interpersonal comparisons and psychological empowerment processes. *The relational self* is based on personalized bonds of attachment. This self-aspect denotes a structure shared with others in maintaining relationships and defining the individual's roles or status within those relationships. *The collective self*, or social or socio-centric self, refers to self-definitions derived from membership in groups or social categories. This self-aspect emphasizes group membership, norms, roles, and status defined by groups (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001; Kashima and Hardie, 2000). Each of these self-aspects emerges with distinct social motivation factors. Accordingly, the individual self becomes apparent through individual interests, the relational self through benefits provided to others, and the

collective self through the motivation to ensure the community's well-being (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

## **Mediating roles of Aspects of Self and Ethical Climate and Culture**

Empowering leadership offers significant benefits, including improving employees' psychological well-being, enhancing their performance and creativity, fostering innovation in their work and social support in the workplace, and promoting positive attitudes and motivation. It also helps them tackle job-related challenges (Kim & Beehr, 2022; Alzahrani, 2020; Kim & Beehr, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Thun & Bakker, 2018). Empowering leadership primarily focuses on enabling team members to take responsibility for work organization and to make autonomous decisions (Mezentseva et al., 2023). Corporate ethical values and the perception that these values are essential can explain employees' helping behaviors within the organization. Additionally, ethical values influence employees' sense of belonging, highlighting keywords for leaders to create a corporate culture in which employees feel closely connected (Mitonga-Monga & Flotman, 2021). Thus, empowering leadership fosters collaboration by granting individuals authority and responsibility. In this study, the relationship between empowering leadership and the effectiveness of teams in which healthcare professionals participate, mediated by ethical climate and culture and by individuals' self-aspects, can be explained by social exchange theory. Social exchange theory is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior (Cook et al., 2013). It defines *social exchange* as an individual's initiative toward a goal or another person, the target's reciprocal attitudinal or behavioral response to that initiative, and the relationship that emerges from it (Cropanzano et al., 2017). In other words, social exchange theory suggests that actions aimed at specific goals and the resulting mutual relationship can be discussed.

Furthermore, according to the principles of social exchange theory, employees will reciprocate by developing an emotional commitment to the organization in response to the rewards it provides for their work (Nasrolahi-Vosta & Jalilvand, 2023). Empowering leadership strengthens relationships by supporting, empowering, and contributing to the development of followers toward a common goal (Chow, 2018; Meira & Hancer, 2021), thus emphasizing interdependence, a fundamental principle of social exchange theory (Blau, 2017). In this context, it can be predicted that employees under empowering leaders can enhance their job performance, initiative-taking abilities, and motivation, and improve performance through feedback encouragement (Qian et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018) and employee participation (Lin & Lu, 2023). According to social exchange theory, followers are expected to be motivated to support the leader, collaborate, and improve their performance in response to the leader's support and resources. The leader's style and practices shape employees' responses, thus shaping the reciprocal relationship (Lin et al., 2020) and the content of the organizational structure (such as ethical climate and culture) (Ghasempour-Ganji et al., 2021; Al Halbusi, 2021). Thus, a cycle is formed between empowering leadership and social exchange theory: Empowering leadership increases interdependence among followers, and followers strengthen this relationship by supporting the leader (Fausing et al., 2015; Li et al., 2015). Therefore, this type of leadership and social exchange theory are complementary and supportive concepts.

Moving from the conceptual framework, the intensity of research focusing on empowering leadership, team effectiveness, ethical climate and culture, and aspects of self, which can be named as dynamics influencing and explaining each other with different variables in the literature, is remarkable. The presence or absence of individuals' attempts to define themselves through others' speeches, the intensity of the audience addressed, and cultural differences (Kasagi & Daibo, 2015) are considered determinants of interpersonal interactions in the workplace. Team effectiveness depends on the interdependence among members, the sharing of necessary information to achieve outcomes, and participation and perception of participation in the system working within defined boundaries and scope (Qaddumi et al., 2021). Mathieu et al. (2008) have developed a team effectiveness framework. In this scheme, organizational,

team, and individual characteristics are inputs, while performance obtained through specific processes constitutes the output. In this regard, individual innovativeness, performance, creativity, and leadership within the organization are considered inputs to team effectiveness. Studies indicate the effectiveness of empowering leadership in increasing team effectiveness, ensuring team cohesion, and providing ethical climate and culture through variables such as individual learning, innovative behavior, continuous improvement, psychological empowerment, and participation (Akkoç et al., 2022; Mutonyi et al., 2020; Van Assen, 2020; Hassi, 2019; Jada & Mukhopadhyay, 2019) attempt to reveal the mediating role in the relationship established with these variables. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the roles of ethical climate and culture in explaining the relationship between empowering leadership and team effectiveness, and to identify the relationships between different self-images and these variables. It can be said that the study has two unique values in terms of its sample and research model: (1) The mediation roles in this study aim to provide a unique contribution to the literature by focusing on explaining the direct relationship between variables. (2) Examining the mentioned variables in the context of behaviors in the healthcare sector, where team performance and relationships are prominent, is essential. In light of the primary purpose and strengths mentioned, the following hypotheses have been tested:

(a) Significant correlations exist between empowering leadership, team effectiveness, ethical climate and culture, and the aspects of self.

(b) Ethical climate and culture mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and team effectiveness.

## **Methodology**

The study investigates the mediating effect of ethical climate and culture on the relationship between empowering leadership and team effectiveness. The research model proposes a positive relationship between team effectiveness and empowering leadership. Moreover, it suggests that an ethical climate and culture enhance this relationship. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the validity of the measurement model, and path diagram analyses were performed to test the hypotheses.

## **Participants**

Within the scope of the study, survey forms were distributed to 820 healthcare professionals working in three hospitals in Konya, and data were collected through face-to-face interviews. After data collection, it was determined that 25 participants had incomplete surveys, which were excluded from the analysis. Therefore, analyses were conducted based on the survey data from 795 participants (Response Rate: 97%). During the data collection process, which was voluntary, random and cluster sampling methods based on hospital size were used (A Hospital: 48.3%, B Hospital: 26%, and C Hospital: 25.7%). Of the participants, 461 were female (58%), and 334 were male (42%). The majority (516; 65%) of the participants were married, with 373 (47%) in the 20-30 age range, 286 (36%) in the 31-41 age range, and 136 in the 42+ age range. Among the participants, 207 (26.0%) had a high school degree, and 294 (37%) had an associate degree. Predominantly, 398 (50%) participants were nurses, while 167 (21%) served as administrative staff. Most participants (636; 80%) had worked in the institution for 1-8 years.

## **Measurements**

In this study's data collection, the Empowering Leadership Scale, Team Effectiveness Scale, Ethical Climate and Culture Scale, and Relational, Individual, and Collective Self-Aspects (RIC) Scale were used. A personal information form prepared by the researchers to obtain sociodemographic information was added to the survey. Information regarding the personal information form and measurement tools is provided below.

### *Personal Information Form*

This form collected descriptive information about the participants, including age, gender, educational status, marital status, occupation, institution of employment, and length of service.

### *Empowering Leadership Scale*

The items of the measurement tool were developed by Amundsen and Martinsen (2014b), and their validity and reliability were tested. In the initial version of the scale, eight EL behaviors were designed to measure delegation, coordination, and information sharing; encourage initiative, goal focus, and efficacy support; and inspire, model, and guide. According to the confirmatory factor analysis results, the final model included an autonomy support dimension with 12 items and a development support dimension with 6 items. In the adaptation study to Turkish conducted by Aslan and Akarçay-Ulutaş (2015a), responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale (1=never, 5=always). The CR/AVE coefficients for the total scale, autonomy support, and development support dimensions were 0.94/0.61, 0.87/0.58, and 0.88/0.60, respectively (Aslan & Akarçay Ulutaş, 2015a). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.95.

### *Team Effectiveness Scale*

Amundson (2003) developed the measurement tool items, and their validity and reliability were tested. The measurement tool has two versions prepared for team members (members) and team leaders (supervisors): social, individual assessment points, and performance indicators. The adaptation of the measurement tool used in this study, which is the member version, was conducted by Aslan and Özata (2008), and responses were obtained using a 7-point Likert-type rating scale. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the member version of the measurement tool was 0.85 (Aslan & Özata, 2008). However, this study reported a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.95.

### *Relational, Individual, and Collective Self-Aspects (RIC) Scale*

The measurement tool developed by Kashima and Hardie (2000) consists of 30 items organized into three sub-dimensions: Relational, Individual, and Collective. Each dimension comprises ten items. The measurement tool is structured on a 7-point Likert scale (1=not like me, not true of me; 7=like me, very true of me). In Kashima and Hardie's (2000) study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the individual, relational, and collective self-dimensions were calculated as 0.72, 0.82, and 0.78, respectively. In this study, the total Cronbach's Alpha for the scale was 0.95. In contrast, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the individual, relational, and collective self-sub-dimensions were deemed reliable at 0.90, 0.91, and 0.91, respectively.

### *Ethical Climate and Culture Scale*

The measurement instrument, developed by Trevino et al. (1998), consists of 39 items and ten dimensions. These dimensions are named as ethical environment (9 items), employee-focused climate (6 items), community-focused climate (4 items), obedience to authority (3 items), code implementation (4 items), self-interest climate (2 items), efficiency climate (4 items), rules and procedures climate (2 items), personal ethics climate (3 items), and law and professional codes climate (2 items). Responses were collected using a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree), and the measurement instrument was adapted into Turkish by Aslan and Akarçay-Ulutaş (2015b). In the adaptation study, a new version of 13 items from the ethical environment, employee-focused, community-focused, and law-and-professional-codes climate dimensions showed good fit indices. In this study, the scale's internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was 0.92.

## Data Analysis

This study used SPSS 26 and AMOS Graphics 24 for data analysis. A normality test was conducted to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution, and skewness, kurtosis, and standard error values were examined. Since the skewness and kurtosis values were between -2.50 and +2.50, it was assumed that the data followed a normal distribution, given the sample size in the study (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Kline, 2013; Aminu & Shariff, 2014). Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to determine the scales' reliability. CFA was conducted to determine the structural validity of the measurement model, and goodness-of-fit indices ( $\chi^2/df$ , RMSEA, GFI, NFI, CFI, AGFI) were examined.

Pearson Correlation analysis was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between the variables. Structural equation model (SEM) analysis was employed to test the hypotheses. (1) SEM allows for the examination of complex relationships between dependent and independent variables (Thakkar, 2020). Therefore, the nature and direction of these causal relationships can be more clearly revealed by modeling the relationship between empowering leadership and team effectiveness through mediating variables such as ethical climate and culture. (2) SEM is a powerful tool for determining the effects of mediating and moderating variables (Cheung & Lau, 2008). To examine how individual differences, such as self-aspects, affect these relationships, SEM shows how these individual differences interact with other variables and how these effects are incorporated into the overall model. (3) SEM provides various fit indices to evaluate how well a theoretical model fits the data, which allows for testing the model's validity and reliability through these indices, thereby enhancing the reliability of the research findings (Beribisky & Cribbie, 2023). (4) SEM can examine relationships between variables in linear or non-linear ways and assess the fit between the observed data and the model (Shi et al., 2018). This helps analyze how well the model aligns with theory and how closely it matches the data. To test the mediating role and assess the significance of indirect effects, the Monte Carlo parametric bootstrap option (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013) was used, and the highest probability method was employed across 2,000 sampling groups at a 95% confidence interval. Additionally, the bootstrap method was utilized to examine the mediating role. In this method, the mediation effect can be inferred if the bootstrap upper bound and lower bound do not contain 0 (zero). In contrast, if 0 (zero) is included, the mediation effect cannot be inferred (Hayes, 2018).

## Results

In the first step, the standard distribution fit of the measurement tools was checked. The skewness and kurtosis values were observed to fall within the range of -2.50 and +2.50 for each measurement tool (Table 1). Therefore, the maximum likelihood method was applied in the analyses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients

	Mean	Sd.	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>1. EL</b>	3.177	0.81 5	-0.329	-0.173	(0.95)						
<b>2. TE</b>	5.019	1.48 7	-0.803	-0.064	0.420*	(0.95)					
<b>3. AS</b>	5.708	0.83 2	-0.809	0.318	0.169*	0.357*	(0.95)				
<b>4. IS</b>	5.758	0.86 2	-0.847	0.342	0.146*	0.330*	0.954*	(0.90)			
<b>5. RS</b>	5.728	0.86 2	-0.794	0.192	0.160*	0.350*	0.973*	0.896*	(0.91)		
<b>6. CS</b>	5.638	0.87 1	-0.582	-0.107	0.182*	0.350*	0.961*	0.859*	0.914*	(0.91)	
<b>7. ECC</b>	3.117	0.78 1	-0.183	-0.132	0.669*	0.423*	0.194*	0.177*	0.182*	0.201*	(0.92 )

\*\* $p < 0.001$ ,  $n = 795$ . In the parentheses, the values provided represent Cronbach's Alpha. EL: Empowering Leadership; TE: Team Effectiveness; AS: the Aspects of Self; IS: Individual Self; RS: Relational Self; CS: Collective Self; ECC: Ethical Climate and Culture

It has been determined that there are significant positive relationships at the 0.001 level between EL, TE, IS, RS, CS, and ECC (Table 1). Upon detailed examination of Table 1, weak relationships between EL and three aspects of the self, namely individual, relational, and collective, are noteworthy. Additionally, moderate positive relationships are observed among EL, TE, and ECC. Accordingly, as EL increases/decreases in an organization, IS, RS, and CS will decrease at a low level. In contrast, TE, ECC will increase/decrease moderately. Significant positive moderate relationships exist between TE and self-images, IS, RS, and CS, and ECC.

Furthermore, there are high-level positive relationships between three aspects of the self and IS, RS, and CS, and low-level positive relationships between three aspects of the self and ECC. Finally, it has been found that IS, RS, and CS are positively and weakly related to ECC. Thus, as IS, RS, and CS increase/decrease, ECC in the organization increases/decreases, and conversely, as ECC in the organization increases/decreases, individual, relational, and collective self-increase/decrease.

Table 2. Goodness of fit statistics of scales and research model

	CMIN/DF	NFI	GFI	CFI	AGFI	RMSEA
<b>EL</b>	4.732	0.92 0	0.91 6	0.93 5	0.886	0.069
<b>ECC</b>	4.559	0.99 0	0.98 0	0.99 2	0.953	0.067
<b>TE</b>	4.531	0.95 1	0.95 3	0.96 1	0.925	0.066
<b>Measurement Model</b>	3.674	0.87 8	0.84 8	0.90 8	0.828	0.561

$\chi^2/df$  = Ratio of chi-square statistic to degrees of freedom; NFI = Normed Fit Index; GFI = Goodness Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; AGFI = Adjustment Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation. EL: Empowering Leadership; TE: Team Effectiveness; ECC: Ethical Climate and Culture

The results obtained from the CFA are presented in Table 2. The goodness of fit indices of the scales were found to meet their threshold levels ( $\chi^2/df = 3.674$ ; NFI = 0.878; GFI = 0.848; CFI = 0.908; AGFI = 0.828; RMSEA = 0.056) (Hooper et al., 2008; Munro, 2005; Wang & Wang,

2019). Consequently, it has been determined that the scales utilized in the study demonstrate Turkish validity and reliability. Moreover, the hypothesized theoretical structure has been confirmed.

*Table 3. Results of Structural Equation Model (SEM)*

Hypothesized path	Direct Effect ( $\beta$ )	Indirect Effect	Bootstrap Values Lower-Upper	Hypotheses
<b>EL → TE</b>	0.40	-	-	H1 supported
<b>EL → ECC</b>	0.71	-	-	H2 supported
<b>ECC → TE</b>	0.28	-	-	H3 supported
<b>EL → ECC → TE</b>		0.196	0.124-0.286	H4 supported

*n* = 795 (2.000 Bootstrap sample), %95 Bias Corrected, %95 Confidence Interval. EL: Empowering Leadership; TE: Team Effectiveness; ECC: Ethical Climate and Culture.

After CFA, path analysis was performed to test the research hypotheses and the mediation effect. Analysis results are given in Table 3. First, the H1 hypothesis was tested, and it was determined that EL affects TE ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In the second step, the H2 hypothesis, which stated the effect of EL on ECC, was tested and supported ( $\beta = 0.71$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In the third step, it was determined that ECC affected TE (H3) ( $\beta = 0.28$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). According to Cohen (1988), a low effect size is indicated when R hovers around 0.10, a medium effect size when R varies around 0.30, and a large effect size when R exceeds 0.30. In light of this, it is evident that the most substantial direct effect is between EL and ECC. There is a moderate direct effect between EL and TE and a weak direct effect between ECC and TE (H4).

According to Table 3, it has been determined that ethical climate and culture mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and team effectiveness (0.124-0.286) (Hayes, 2018). Additionally, ECC accounts for 51% of the total variance in EL ( $R^2 = 0.51$ ). Modeling EL as a direct predictor and ECC as a mediating variable explains 20% of the total variance in TE ( $R^2 = 0.20$ ). Thus, the research model has been supported.

## Discussion

This study examines how perceived empowering leadership is associated with ethical climate and culture in shaping team performance in healthcare work settings, while also exploring the relationships among the different self-aspect dimensions (individual, relational, and collective) and the study variables. However, how individuals present themselves has yet to be included in the research model, even though these types are associated with the model's fundamental variables. Although these types are related to the variables constituting the research model, they still need to demonstrate sufficient capability to determine the mediating role. Several notable findings from this study may help clarify how healthcare workers and managers establish psychological, social, and institutional connections.

The primary outcome of this study is the relationship between empowering leadership, team effectiveness, individual self, relational self, collective self, self-images, and ethical climate and culture among healthcare workers. As awareness of an empowering leadership style increases, individuals' perceptions of themselves tend to grow. This may be interpreted as empowering leadership, enhancing individuals' self-confidence, or making individuals feel more competent and effective. The facilitative role of empowering leadership in performance has been examined in previous studies, which have shown that it contributes to individuals'

perceptions of personal competence, leader-member interactions, and self-esteem (Zheng et al., 2023; Dong et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2018). Additionally, the relational self is considered among the concepts that determine the effects of leadership behavior (Bin Saeed et al., 2019). Empowering leadership encourages individuals to take on organizational roles, thereby contributing to the development of collective behavior and identity norms by facilitating shared interpretations and similar perceptual bases (Jung et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the leader's efforts to strengthen collective identity aim to transform followers' self-perceptions by focusing on common ideologies and values. This emphasis supports group members in forming strong connections with one another and in uniting around a common purpose (Shamir et al., 1998). Thus, this study's findings provide insight into understanding the impact of empowering leadership style on followers. Although the conceptual framework evaluated individuals' self-aspects, the study's focus on the relationship between self and the characteristics that differentiate individuals from others is limited. This concept, which emphasizes the individual's unique points in social comparison processes, highlights their values, preferences, and identity. However, studies such as Voyer and McIntosh (2013), Herbst and Conradie (2011), and Amundsen and Martinsen (2014a), which consider the reflections of self on organizational climate and culture alongside personality traits, partially support the findings of this study in this regard.

Secondly, the relationships identified between ethical climate and culture and individual, relational, and collective self-aspects among employees can provide insights into individuals' social identities within the organization and their own structure in relation to these identity definitions. Another significant finding that can be evaluated in this context is the relationship between self-image and team effectiveness. This summarizes the findings of a study aimed at understanding the effects of leadership styles and individuals' self-aspects on team effectiveness and ethical culture. Studies addressing the relationship between roles and statuses within the group and the ethical framework (Kuenzi et al., 2020; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019) support the explanations and findings regarding values preservation, relationship structures, and impression management, thus supporting the results of this study.

Thirdly, our research indicates that empowering leadership enhances team performance. This finding provides evidence that empowering leadership contributes to team success. It is observed that leader-member interaction is a significant mediator between empowering leadership and task performance (Lee et al., 2018). The positive relationship between empowering leadership and employee motivation, resources, attitudes, and job performance (Kim et al., 2018) and its contributions to behavioral and performance outcomes (Kundu et al., 2019) are supported. The supportive aspect of empowering leadership, in enhancing cohesion within the group, especially by supporting individual learning and the innovative and creative behaviors of team members, is reflected in performance outcomes (Mutonyi et al., 2020; Imam et al., 2020). Another result that can be discussed holistically is the supportive role of ethical climate and culture in enhancing team effectiveness. Although the impact of ethical climate and culture on team effectiveness is weaker than the direct effect between empowering leadership and team effectiveness, the ethical framework within the organization positively contributes to the effectiveness of groups and teams. This result indicates that a healthy ethical climate and organizational culture can positively influence team performance. An ethical work environment and culture based on values can positively affect collaboration, motivation, and effective communication among team members (Mercader et al., 2021). Therefore, this study's findings support the idea that an organizational culture and climate grounded in ethical values can enhance team performance. Increasing team collaboration is essential for hospital management, and motivation, as well as transparent performance evaluation systems, can be highlighted (Astuti, 2021). Thus, an ethical climate and culture emphasizing transparency and

openness point towards performance-oriented outcomes. When considered comprehensively alongside the results of path analysis, it is evident that the impacts of empowering leadership and ethical climate and culture on team effectiveness, and the effect of team effectiveness, are both strong and weak. In other words, the effects of empowering leadership style, which contributes to employees in terms of developmental support and autonomy dimensions, and especially the effects of ethical norms aimed at preventing absenteeism, on team performance appear to be moderate and balanced (Tang et al., 2020; Smallfield et al., 2020; Kim & Beehr, 2020).

The fourth main finding of the current study indicates that empowering leadership significantly contributes to the organization's ethical values and culture. Furthermore, in conjunction with the path analysis results, it becomes apparent that the effect of empowering leadership on ethical climate and culture is more distinct and robust than that of other variables. In other words, empowering leadership effectively establishes ethical norms and shapes cultural values (Qing et al., 2020). This finding provides evidence that leadership style can reinforce the organization's ethical framework and influence its culture. The formation of a corporate ethical climate and culture is supported by the mediating effect of psychological empowerment, which reduces turnover intentions (Suifan et al., 2020). It is regarded as an outcome of employee performance. Moreover, empowering leadership that supports employees in exploring, integrating, and disseminating new ideas and knowledge may also foster an ethical climate and culture (Naqshbandi et al., 2019).

Additionally, the role of ethical climate and culture in preparing employees for change and innovation is supported (Metwally et al., 2019; Pasricha et al., 2018). The impact of leadership style on establishing ethical norms and cultural values is more pronounced than other factors. Such an intense influence may imply that leadership practices deeply influence the organizational value system and culture. Another result of the analysis supports this prominent finding highlighted in the study. It is stated that ethical climate and culture explain a portion of the total variance in empowering leadership (51%) and team effectiveness (20%). This indicates the significant role of ethical climate and culture in the investigated relationships and enhances the model's explanatory power. This suggests that the variables and relationships in the model explain some variance, but other factors may also be influential in team effectiveness.

Finally, it is noteworthy that ethical climate and culture mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and team effectiveness. Therefore, empowering leadership may indirectly enhance team effectiveness by fostering an ethical climate and culture. Research conducted by Lin et al. (2020), Hendryadi et al. (2019), Jada and Mukhopadhyay (2019), Kim and Beehr (2020), Lin et al. (2019), and Suifan et al. (2020) supports that empowering leadership focuses on ethical climate and culture by reducing adverse organizational outcomes such as conflict management, hoarding behavior, and turnover intention, and by promoting knowledge sharing, innovative behaviors, emotional commitment, and self-efficacy. Furthermore, the impact of empowering leadership on increasing employees' job commitment through person-job fit and person-group fit (Cai et al., 2018), as well as enhancing employees' perceptions of their ability to perform a variety of tasks (Hao et al., 2018), may help explain the effectiveness of teams within the organization.

In its focus, the current study demonstrates that empowering leadership positively influences ethical climate and culture, ultimately indirectly enhancing team effectiveness. Therefore, it is concluded that the research model accurately represents empowering leadership, team effectiveness, and ethical climate and is consistent with the data. Such a role can contribute to a better understanding of the complex relationships between leadership and team effectiveness.

Additionally, understanding the self-images employees possess and exhibit in their interactions with others contributes to shaping leadership styles (such as empowering leadership), which is essential for fostering an ethical climate and culture.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

While the current study presents a well-supported research model by confirming hypotheses that demonstrate relationships and mediating effects using research data, it has several limitations that warrant further development. Additionally, recommendations will be provided for shaping future studies within these limitations: (1) Although the impact of empowering leadership on team effectiveness is presented in the current study, it would be valuable to elucidate the direction of these effects. Similarly, understanding how ethical climate and cultural norms are reflected among employees within the organization and what constitutes ethical norms forms a dimension that should be included in the research model. (2) The study did not focus on the relationship between healthcare workers' self-identifications (individual, relational, and collective self), leadership style, ethical climate, and culture. Delving deeper into the role of self-aspects in these relationships will shed light on employee behaviors, values, and preferences. (3) Although the study was conducted among healthcare workers, it designed a research model without factors such as the labor-intensive nature of the healthcare sector, the patient-healthcare professional relationship, and the unique delivery of healthcare services. Therefore, incorporating the dynamic and complex structure of the healthcare sector into the research model as control variables will further strengthen healthcare service delivery.

### **Conclusion**

This study has several practical implications for healthcare managers and employees. Firstly, our study demonstrates that empowering leadership can enhance healthcare workers' individual self-aspects and team effectiveness. Therefore, empowering team members and assigning them responsibilities will help them develop their abilities. Emphasizing the importance of effective communication will be instrumental in establishing this interaction. Secondly, as this study highlights, healthcare workers' individual, relational, and collective self-aspects play a significant role in the relationships among leadership style, ethical climate, and culture. Expanding how managers communicate with employees can enhance their understanding of these relationships. Thirdly, the research shows that ethical climate and culture enhance team effectiveness. Therefore, promoting a work environment and culture based on ethical values by healthcare managers can positively influence collaboration, motivation, and effective communication among team members. Fourthly, our study highlights the limitations of research conducted without considering the unique characteristics of the healthcare sector. Therefore, healthcare institution managers and researchers should conduct more comprehensive studies that consider the dynamic and complex structure of healthcare service delivery. Lastly, our findings emphasize that empowering leadership can enhance team effectiveness by meeting employees' developmental needs for support and autonomy. Therefore, managers must use various methods to improve their leadership styles and support employees.

With these results and recommendations, healthcare managers will be able to identify factors and strategies that can shape leadership styles and organizational culture dynamics. In conclusion, our study provides insight into the relationship between empowering leadership, ethical climate and culture, self-aspects, and team effectiveness. This can contribute to developing more effective leadership and team performance strategies and creating a more effective working environment in healthcare institutions.

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