

NEUROSCIENCE OF LEADERSHIP: EMOTIONAL CONTAGION AND EMPATHY

Inga Minelgaite Snaebjornsson, Post-doc researcher, University of Iceland

In this presentation emotion contagion and empathy is explored in relation to a followercentric approach of leadership and (social) neuroscience. This presentation is based on the book chapter written by I.M.Snaebjornsson and E.Vaiciukynaite. Leader's empathy holds its importance as a factor of leadership success and effectiveness. Therefore, leadership literature for a few decades has acknowledged the importance of empathy and emotion, however, it has not kept up to date with developments in empathy and emotion contagion theory and their integration into leadership theories. Hence, in this presentation, empathy is discussed in the context of leadership, based on the interdisciplinary research, specifically focusing on the leader-follower dyad. An enhanced view of empathy is provided, integrating the neural underpinnings of empathy and an overview of the main followercentric perspectives in literature. The presentation draws attention to the role of the follower in the construction process of leadership and leaders, where leadership is viewed as a social construction, and the emergence of a leader is viewed as generated in the cognitive, attributional, and social identity processes of followers. Finally, a conceptual model of emotion contagion in the process of leadership is proposed. The model presents the process of emotion exchange during the interaction of a leader and a follower.