

Jonsdottir and Fridriksdottir [21] pointed out that Mineyama et al. [23] used the term active listening in relation to supervisors' listening-centred communication. Purdy [35] wrote about conscious and effective listening, which refers to active listening. Active listening is a way of listening to another person to gain a deeper understanding of the message and context. It is also the skill of responding effectively to the other person and the message with emotional intelligence [20,21,35,36].

According to both Drollinger et al. [37] and Brownell [20,38], there are several stages in the active-empathetic listening process. These can be described as, firstly, the sensing stage. The words are heard, and the listener implies that he/she is truly listening through the use of body language, gestures, and other forms of non-verbal acknowledgement. Secondly, there is the interpreting stage, where the listener evaluates the true meaning behind the received message. Last but not least, there is the responding stage, where the listener indicates to the others (those who speak) that the message has been received and informs them of how events will continue [21,36].

Research indicates that supervisors' active-empathetic listening enhances good and supportive working conditions through open communication between the supervisor and subordinates, which is an important predictor of employees' well-being [23]. Mineyama et al. [23] found that employees who had a supervisor with a higher active-empathetic listening score experienced higher job control. Further, Mineyama et al. [23] concluded that a supervisor's active listening is an important factor in determining work-related stress among employees. This is in line with the findings of Ikemi et al. [39]. They found that employees who rated their supervisor as having a higher person-centred attitude, which is a core attitude for active-empathetic listening, had less depression and anxiety and were less fatigued (see, e.g., [36]). Lloyd et al. [22] concluded, from their results, that supervisors' active-empathetic listening had positive effects on employees' emotional condition as well as their loyalty to the organisation. Eisenberger [40] argued that employees that perceive their supervisor as being supportive believe that their supervisor has concern for their feelings and needs and cares about their well-being.

To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to extend the previous research literature by investigating the important dimension of supervisors' supportive communication—i.e., active-empathetic listening—in relation to work engagement. We aim to analyse this relationship by seeking answers to the following research question: How is supervisors' active-empathetic listening associated with employees' work engagement—i.e., vigour, dedication and absorption?

### 3. Methods

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#### 3.1. Study Design and Participants

This is a cross-sectional study that uses linear regression analysis to investigate the association between supervisors' active-empathetic listening and employees' work engagement. The participants were part of a panel maintained by the Social Science Research Institute in Iceland, and data gathering was conducted in cooperation with the institute. The panel is a representative sample of the Icelandic population and consists of people 18 years old or older. It was constituted using a random sample from the National Register of Iceland. Per the Icelandic Guidelines for Research Ethics