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RESEARCH PAPER

The Impact of Teacher's Empathy on Students' Self-Compassion: An Evidence-Based Intervention Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the correlation between a teacher's empathy and a student's self-compassion. It also aimed to enhance empathy in teachers through a pre-stage intervention. The study involved 200 students and 30 teachers, and questionnaires were translated into Urdu for data collection. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis, employing Pearson correlation analysis to assess the relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion. Regression analysis was conducted to explore the predictive nature of teacher empathy on student self-compassion. Paired sample t-tests were used to compare pretest and posttest scores. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion, supporting the hypothesis that empathetic behavior by teachers predicts students' self-compassion. The pre-stage intervention effectively increased empathy in teachers, as reflected by a significant change in scores between the pretest and posttest. These findings highlight the crucial role of teacher empathy in fostering student self-compassion and contribute to the existing literature on the teacher-student relationship, emphasizing the importance of empathy in promoting self-compassion among students.

Keywords: Intervention, Student's Self-Compassion, Teacher's Empathy

Introduction

According to the Dalai Lama, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." Self-compassion refers to treating oneself with warmth, kindness, understanding, and acceptance, even during challenging times. Research suggests that individuals with self-compassion experience better emotional and mental well-being and are more resilient to stress and burnout (Neff, 2009).

Studies have found a positive relationship between self-compassion and adaptive psychological functioning. Self-compassion promotes positive coping efficacy, positive emotions, and reduces negative emotions, contributing to psychological well-being (Allen & Leary, 2010). It also plays a role in self-improvement motivation, with individuals high in self-compassion being more motivated to improve themselves (Breines & Chen, 2012)

Interventions aimed at developing self-compassion have shown promising results. They have been associated with decreased vulnerability to depression, stress, self-criticism, and increased life satisfaction (Neff & Germer, 2013). However, studies suggest that self-compassion levels may be lower in younger generations and in collectivistic cultures, where individuals prioritize the needs of the group over their own (Kong et al., 2012).

Parents and teachers play crucial roles in fostering self-compassion in individuals. Supportive parents who offer warmth and empathy contribute to the development of self-compassion in their children (Kong et al., 2012) .Similarly, interventions in schools that

promote social and emotional learning have been successful in increasing self-compassion among students (Bluth & Blanton, 2015).

Teachers, in particular, have a significant impact on students' well-being and development. Their empathy, kindness, and positive behavior create a positive classroom environment and act as role models for students (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). Empathetic teachers who understand students' needs and preferences can effectively foster self-compassion, positively influencing the school climate and students' engagement (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

The relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion is significant. When teachers show care, warmth, and kindness, students feel secure and learn to extend that compassion to themselves. Empathetic teachers contribute to students' academic performance, motivation, and engagement (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Training teachers in effective coping strategies and enhancing their empathy and compassion can create a pleasant learning environment, boosting students' motivation and engagement (Wang et al., 2020).

The thesis incorporates Social Cognitive Theory, Attachment Theory, and Self-determination Theory to understand the relationship between teacher empathy and students' self-compassion.

Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes observational learning, suggesting that students learn self-compassion by observing empathetic teachers.

Attachment Theory highlights the importance of emotional bonding. Empathetic teachers create a positive emotional bond that fosters self-compassion in students.

Self-determination Theory focuses on fulfilling students' needs for connection, competence, and autonomy. Empathetic teachers meet these needs, promoting a supportive environment and fostering self-compassion.

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the relationship between teachers' empathy and students' self-compassion, as well as evidence-based interventions to promote empathy in teachers. Empathy in teaching is defined as individuals' ability to appreciate and share others' emotions. Empathic teachers create a positive classroom environment by understanding their students' needs and preferences, identifying, and addressing bullying, and positively influencing school culture. Teachers' empathy enhances students' learning outcomes, reduces fear of failure, and promotes a sense of belonging. Empathic teachers also exhibit positive self-beliefs and social and emotional competency, which contribute to their effectiveness as educators (Jennings et al., 2013)

Teachers' empathy is closely related to students' self-compassion. Students who receive empathy, care, kindness, and support from their teachers perform better academically, develop self-efficacy, and exhibit motivation and self-reliance. Empathic teachers foster a sense of worthiness in students and contribute to their sense of belonging. On the other hand, punitive responses to misbehavior can negatively impact students' sense of self-worth. Teachers' empathy plays a crucial role in creating a supportive learning environment that enhances students' engagement, motivation, and self-sufficiency (Aldrup et al., 2022).

Interventions can be employed to improve teachers' empathy. Teacher-centered empathy interventions have been shown to decrease biases and enhance understanding among pre-service teachers. Teaching empathy to teachers also positively impacts students'

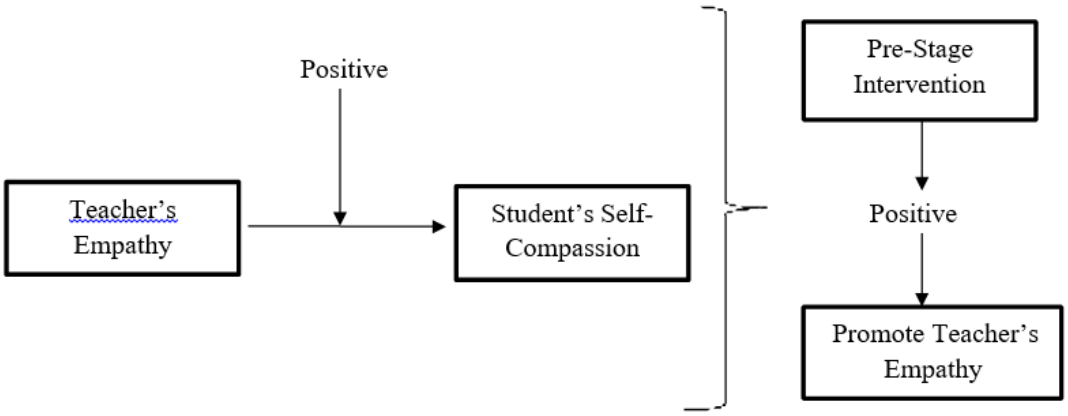
perception of learning, content understanding, and skill acquisition. Mindfulness-based interventions have been effective in developing empathy and compassion in children and adolescents. Overall, interventions aimed at promoting empathy, well-being, and social-emotional competency in teachers have been successful (Aldrup et al., 2022).

The significance of studying the relationship between teachers' empathy and students' self-compassion lies in the creation of nurturing educational environments that support students in developing self-compassion. Empathic teachers contribute to safe and supportive environments where students feel understood, valued, and accepted. This positively impacts students' motivation, self-confidence, and life skills. By fostering empathy in teachers, the aim is to cultivate future leaders and professionals who positively impact society. The research findings can inform teachers about professional development programs and contribute to the betterment of education (Zhang et al., 2021).

Proposed Model

In this study, the relationship between teachers' empathy and students' self-compassion is analyzed first and then pre-stage intervention will be applied to promote empathy in teachers.

Teacher's empathy will positively impact student's self-compassion and pre-stage intervention will positively promote empathy in teachers.



Hypotheses

The study proposes two hypotheses:

- There is a significant positive relationship between a teacher's empathy and a student's self-compassion.
- There will be a significant improvement in teachers' empathy levels between the pre-intervention and post-intervention trials.

Material and Methods

This study utilizes a mixed-method approach with two phases. Phase I employs a correlational research design, while phase II involves an intervention study. The correlational study design is employed in phase I to examine the relationship between empathy in teachers and self-compassion in students, without manipulation or control by the researcher. Phase II focuses on designing an intervention to promote empathy among teachers, as interventions are crucial in developing treatment and strategies for targeted populations .

Sample

The correlational study includes a sample of 200 students and 20 teachers from primary classes, specifically targeting Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5. Teachers were selected based on their previous year's connection with the same students, ensuring a link between teachers' behavior and students' perceptions. The participating students, both male and female, were between 9 to 12 years old. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed for sample selection, allowing the researcher to target individuals who met specific characteristics and criteria.

Research Instruments

Teachers Empathy Scale

The Teachers Empathy Scale, developed by Tanhan, Kasap, Hasan, and Ünsal in 2021, is used to measure empathy in teachers. The scale consists of seven items rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a coefficient of .771. The scale's suitability for factor analysis was confirmed by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test value of 0.848 and a significant Bartlett's test ($p < 0.05$).

Self-Compassion Scale for Children

To assess self-compassion in students, the Self-Compassion Scale Short Form Adapted for Children (19) is utilized. The scale consists of two subscales: positive self-compassion and negative self-compassion. Each subscale contains six items rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The psychometric properties of the scale were assessed, resulting in alpha coefficients.

of .68 and .73 for positive and negative self-compassion, respectively.

Phase I of the study focused on translating the Self-Compassion Scale into Urdu, the native language of the students, to ensure its linguistic and cultural appropriateness. The translation process aimed to enhance students' understanding of the scale and promote accurate responses. The Self-Compassion Scale Short Form Adapted for Children was used to measure self-compassion in students aged 8 to 12. The translation involved a forward-backward method, where the questionnaire was first translated from English to Urdu by a subject matter expert. A committee of experts reviewed the forward translation for validity and clarity. Then, a backward translation from Urdu to English was conducted to ensure consistency and accuracy. The committee reviewed and discussed both translations to address grammatical accuracy, clarity, and cultural relevance. The finalized translated questionnaire was approved by the committee and used in the study.

The research study obtained permission from multiple schools to conduct the research. The permission process involved engaging with school administrations, providing comprehensive overviews of the study, addressing inquiries and concerns, and formalizing the collaboration through consent forms or agreement documents. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection, were prioritized throughout the research process. Data collection involved the participation of both teachers and students, with questionnaires distributed and guidelines provided. The study was conducted in schools in Gujranwala, Pakistan, and the participants showed focus and sincerity. Phase III of the study implemented the Empathic-Discipline intervention, which aimed to promote empathy among teachers and improve teacher-student relationships. The intervention involved sessions designed to cultivate empathic mindsets and enhance teachers' understanding of students' perspectives and challenges. Pre-tests and follow-up tests were administered to assess the effects of the intervention.

Pre-session

In the pre-session, participating teachers were given an overview of the empathic discipline intervention's purpose and goals. A pre-test was conducted to assess the baseline level of teachers' empathy. Consent forms were obtained from the participating schools, and teachers were informed about the expectations and time commitment involved in the intervention. Additionally, teachers received training on using Google Meet for the intervention sessions.

Session 1

The first module introduced teachers to the objectives and goals of the intervention. They learned about the significance of empathy, how it strengthens teacher-student relationships, and how it benefits disciplinary situations in the classroom. The module aimed to promote self-reflection in teachers and change their perspectives on student misbehavior. Teachers shared their disciplinary methods and student responses, with the goal of displacing negative perceptions and adopting empathic behaviors. Activities and exercises were used to help teachers take their students' perspectives and understand their emotions, thoughts, and motivations.

Session 2

After a two-week gap, the second session focused on several aims. Firstly, teachers were encouraged to listen attentively, maintain eye contact, and display open body language to strengthen the teacher-student relationship. Understanding individual differences in an inclusive classroom was emphasized, with teachers advised to respect students' varied backgrounds and experiences. Teachers were also encouraged to acknowledge students' strengths and weaknesses, offer emotional support, and employ problem-solving techniques. Open-ended questions were recommended to facilitate open communication and create a safe space for students.

Post-session recommendations

After the intervention sessions, follow-up tests or assessments were conducted to measure the impact on teachers' empathy. A two-week gap was provided for teachers to implement the strategies learned during the sessions. Ongoing support and guidance were offered to teachers as they applied empathic discipline strategies in their classrooms. Feedback from teachers and students was collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in improving teacher-student relationships and classroom dynamics.

Phase IV

Phase IV aims to compare the effect size by examining teachers before and after an intervention. This phase of the study seeks to measure and analyze the changes in teachers' outcomes or variables of interest following the intervention. By comparing the data collected before and after the intervention, researchers can assess the impact or effect size of the intervention on the targeted variables. This analysis helps to determine the effectiveness and magnitude of the intervention's influence on the measured outcomes.

Pretest and Posttest

Before the beginning of an intervention, permission was taken from schools, and consent forms were obtained from the interested targeted population. At the pre-testing assessment, the Teacher empathy scale was sent to teachers, and asked to fill it out before the first session. The scale concluded 7 Likert items and demographic information (e.g., teaching experience, relationship status, no. of children, qualification and which grade are

they teaching?). Teachers filled out the forms and the time slots and suitable days managed with them for the first session of an intervention.

With a gap of two weeks after the second session, a posttest will be taken. The post-testing assessment assessed the same measures 7 Likert items and demographic information (e.g., teaching experience, relationship status, no. of children, qualification and which grade are they teaching?) as the pre-testing assessment. When the participants fill out the forms after implementing what they have learned, the T-test will analyze the effect size before and after an intervention.

Results and Discussion

The collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Pearson correlation was used to identify the relationship between variables, regression analysis was employed to determine a linear relationship, and paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare pretest and posttest scores.

In Phase I of the study, the student questionnaire was translated into Urdu to ensure its accuracy and cultural appropriateness. In Phase II, data collection was carried out using the translated questionnaire. The results of both phases are as follows.

Table 1
Demographic information of teachers and Students (N=230)

Characteristics	N	%
Relationship Status		
Married	16	53.3
Single	14	46.7
Children		
Yes	5	16.7
No	25	83.3
Qualification F. A	3	10.0
B. A	9	30.0
BS	11	36.7
MPhil	7	23.3
Teaching grade		
Grade 03	3	10.0
Grade 04	10	33.3
Grade 05	17	56.7
Teaching experience 1-4	23	76.6
5-8	7	23.2
Students		
Gender		
Girl	143	71.5
Boy	57	28.5
Grade		
Class 03	56	28.0
Class 04	62	31.0
Class 05	82	41.0
Age		
8	16	8.0
9	39	19.5
10	60	30.0
11	57	28.5
12	28	14.0

Note: N = Frequency, n = Number of Participants (Publication of American Psychological Association, 2020)

Table 01 provides information about the demographics of the participants in the study. It shows that a higher percentage of teachers were married (53.3%) compared to those who were single (46.7%). However, only a small number of teachers had children (16.7%). In terms of qualifications, there were more teachers with a bachelor's degree (36.7%) compared to those with a B.A. degree (30%), MPhil degree (36.7%), and F.A. degree (10%). Most teachers were teaching grade 05 (56.7%), followed by grade 04 (33.3%), and a few were teaching grade 03 (10%). The majority of teachers (76.6%) had 1-4 years of teaching experience, while a smaller percentage (23.2%) had 5-8 years of experience.

Table 01 also indicates that there were more girls (71.5%) than boys (28.5%) among the targeted population of students. The majority of students were in grade 05 (41%) and grade 04 (31%), while a smaller percentage were in grade 03 (28%). The age distribution of the participating students shows that most of them were 10 years old (30%) and 11 years old (28.5%), followed by 9 years old (19.5%), 12 years old (14%), and 8 years old (16.8%)

Table 2
Psychometric properties for study variables (N=230)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*Mini*	*Maxi*	*α*
SCS	41.25	7.485	12.000	59.000	.632
C_TES	27.190	4.336	15.000	33.000	.644
L_TES	25.935	4.119	18.000	32.000	.644

Note. SCS=Self-Compassion Scale, C_TES= Current Teacher's empathy scoring, L_TES= Last Teacher's empathy scoring

Table 2 indicates that on the self-compassion scale, the average score variable is 41.25 while having an SD of 7.485, indicating variability in the data. 12.000 is the lowest score on the SCS variable and the highest score is 59.000. Due to the small population, the reliability for the SCS is 0.632, which indicates moderate internal consistency. In the current teacher empathy scoring, the average score is 27.190 while having an SD of 4.336. The lowest score in the scoring variable is 15.000 and 33.000 is the highest score. Due to the small population, the reliability for the C_TES is 0.644, which indicates moderate internal consistency. In the last teacher's empathy scoring, the average score was 25.935, while having an SD of 4.119. The lowest score in the scoring variable is 18.000 and 32.000 is the highest score. Due to the small population, the reliability for the C_TES is 0.644, which indicates moderate internal consistency.

Table 3
Correlations between Students' Self-compassion, Current teacher's and Last teacher's empathy.

Variables	1	2	3
1. SCS	-		
2. Current TES	0.876***	-	
3. Last TES	0.788***	0.879***	-

Note. SCS=Self-Compassion Scale, C_TES= Current Teacher's empathy scoring, L_TES= Last Teacher's empathy scoring. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3 indicates the highly significant relationship between students' self-compassion, the current teacher's empathy, and the last teacher's empathy. There is a highly statistically significant relationship between the self-compassion of students and the current teacher's empathy (r=0.876, p=.0001). The last teacher's empathy is significantly

correlated with the student's self-compassion (r=0.788, p=.001). The current teacher's empathy and the last teacher's empathy are also highly positively correlated with each other (r=0.879, p=.001)

Table 4
Linear Regression Analysis

	Estimate	SE	95% CI	LL	UL
H_0 Constant	41.215	0.529	40.171	42.259	.001
H_1 Constant	-0.357	1.684	-3.679	2.965	0.832
Current TES	1.390	0.124	1.145	1.635	.001
Last TES	0.146	0.131	-0.112	0.404	0.267

Note. N = 230, CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit

Table 4 indicates that the estimate in the constant term is 41.215, the standard error is 0.529, and the 95% confidence interval (CI) ranges from 40.171 to 42.259. .001 p-value indicates that the constant term is statistically significant. The estimate for the constant under an alternative hypothesis is -0.357 with an SE of 1.684. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the constant ranges from -3.679 to 2.965 and the p-value with the constant of 0.832, indicates that the constant term is not statistically significant under the alternative hypothesis. The estimate for the coefficient of the Current TES variable is 1.390 with a standard error of 0.124. The 95% confidence interval (CI) for the coefficient of Current TES ranges from 1.145 to 1.635. The p- value associated with Current TES is .001, indicating that it is statistically significant in predicting the outcome variable. The estimate for the coefficient of the Last TES variable is

0.146 and the standard error (SE) is 0.131. The 95% confidence interval (CI) ranges from -0.112

to 0.404 and the p-value is 0.267, indicating that it is not statistically significant in predicting the outcome variable.

Phase III of the study involved the implementation phase of the empathic discipline intervention. Teachers were given a two-week period to apply the strategies and approaches they learned during the intervention sessions in their classrooms. This phase aimed to integrate the newly acquired knowledge and skills into their teaching practices.

Following the implementation phase, feedback was collected from the teachers to gather their perspectives on their experiences with implementing empathic discipline. The purpose was to understand any challenges, successes, or changes they observed during this phase.

In addition to collecting feedback, post-tests were conducted to assess any observable changes in the teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with their students. These post-tests aimed to measure the impact of the intervention on the teachers' empathic responses and their overall disciplinary approach in the classroom.

By gathering feedback and conducting post-tests, the researchers aimed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's effectiveness and its influence on the teachers' practices and interactions with their students. This evaluation phase provided insights into the outcomes of the empathic discipline intervention.

Phase IV

After conducting the pretest and posttest, both are compared by T-test analysis. The results are as

Table 5
T-test analysis

	Pretest		Posttest		t(6)	p	Cohen's d
Analysis	M	SD	M	SD			
Pair 1 Pretest-Posttest	22.143	4.525	31.429	1.718	-7.556	.001	-2.856

Note. M=Total mean, SD= Standard deviation

Table 5 indicates that the level of empathy in teachers increased from the pretest (*M*=22.143, *SD*= 4.525) to the posttest (*M*=31.429, *SD*=1.718). The t-score of -7.556 indicates a significant difference between the pretest and posttest. Cohen's d also shows a considerable difference between both tests. The p-value of .001 indicates a significant change which means the difference between both tests does not happen by chance only, it occurs due to the process after the pretest.

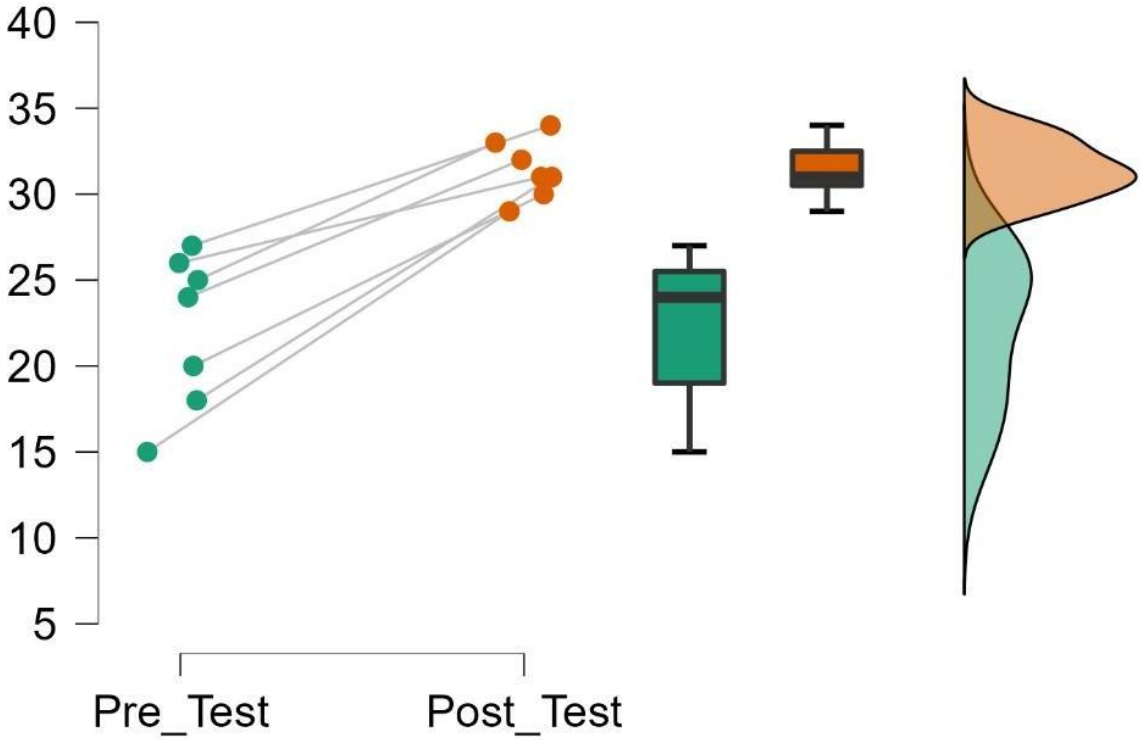


Figure 01 shows significant increases in empathy scale scores after the empathic discipline intervention. Teachers' initial scores of 15, 18, and 20 improved to 27, 29, and 28, respectively. Similarly, teachers with pretest scores of 24, 25, 26, and 27 had post-intervention scores of 30, 33, 32, and 34. The results indicate that the intervention had a positive impact, leading to significant improvements in teachers' empathy levels.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' empathy and students' self-compassion, as well as to explore the effectiveness of a pre-stage intervention in enhancing empathy among teachers. The findings have significant implications for understanding the role of empathy in education and its impact on students' well-being.

The study found a highly significant relationship between students' self-compassion and the current teacher's empathy. Students of empathic teachers demonstrated higher

levels of self-compassion, indicating that they felt loved, listened to, and appreciated without judgment. Empathic teachers fostered a sense of worthiness in their students and promoted their self-reliance and participation in class activities. This aligns with previous research highlighting the positive effects of teachers' positive behaviors on student academic achievements and mindsets.

The study also observed a significant improvement in teachers' empathy levels after the empathic-discipline intervention. The intervention successfully enhanced teachers' empathy, indicating that empathy is a malleable skill that can be developed through targeted interventions and training.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the significant relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion, underscoring the importance of empathic behaviors in promoting student well-being and academic success. The findings support the efficacy of pre-stage interventions in enhancing empathy among teachers and highlight the potential for empathy cultivation in education.

Implications

This study highlights the need for empathetic teaching practices and the role of teachers in fostering self-compassion among students.

It emphasizes that teachers not only impart subject knowledge but also teach life skills, including self-compassion.

The research underscores the significance of nurturing caring and empathetic teaching approaches to promote student well-being and academic success.

It promotes empathy and compassion as essential components of education, aiming to create individuals who positively impact society.

The study suggests that teachers can acquire empathic mindsets through participation in training programs.

Recommendations

The findings may not be generalizable to other contexts due to cultural and educational experience differences. Future studies should include diverse participants to better understand the relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion across various contexts.

The reliance on self-reporting measures and scales to assess teacher empathy and student self-compassion introduces potential biases. Future research could incorporate other methods such as observations, interviews, or physiological measures for a more comprehensive understanding.

The study is cross-sectional, limiting its ability to establish causality. Future research could employ experimental designs to manipulate teacher empathy and assess its impact on student self-compassion.

Controlling potential confounding variables, such as student characteristics, classroom dynamics, and school policies, would enhance the study's validity.

Longer-term studies could investigate the sustained effects of empathic-discipline interventions on teachers' empathy.

Future research could explore moderating and mediating factors to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between teacher empathy and student self-compassion.

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