

THE IMPACT OF TEACHING EMPATHY ON STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the effects of teacher empathy on student-teacher relationships and student academic performance in higher education. To assess the impact of empathy-based teaching techniques, including role-playing, reflective journaling, and simulation exercises, on student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, a systematic review of 12 empirical studies that were done between 2015 and 2025 was conducted. The results have established that teacher empathy is a very important aspect in enhancing better student-teacher rapport, contributing to classroom participation, and emotional intelligence in the student. It was also discovered that teacher enthusiasm enhanced positive impacts of empathy, which enhanced student engagement and academic performance. Although the direct effect of empathy on academic performance was not always positive, most studies revealed a positive correlation between teacher empathy and high student motivation with consequent improvement in academic results. This paper shows the relevance of employing empathy-oriented methods of teaching to the realm of higher education, which implies that not only the empathy of a teacher can contribute to academic achievement but also to the improvement of the learning process in general. The future research must be focused on the long-term effects and the efficiency of empathy training programs among educators.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Definitions

Over the past few years, the role of empathy in learning institutions has been given a lot of emphasis. Empathy, which simply means the capacity to share the emotions of another person, is an important component in establishing desirable interpersonal relationships that are imperative towards effective learning settings.

The necessity of being empathetic is particularly paramount in the context of higher education, when multiple groups of students gather (Zhang, 2022). Making a connection with the students will help in breaking the barriers in the communications and will help to better understand between the students and the

instructors and will help to create an atmosphere of collaboration which will enable learning.

Empathy is split into two broad categories: cognitive empathy, where one will put oneself in the position of another person to perceive what they think or feel and emotional empathy, where one will feel what another person feels. Although these two forms of empathy are crucial, emotional empathy has been found to strengthen human relationships and is therefore of great importance in the learning environment where relationships play a very significant role in achieving academic results. Empathy in higher education can be taught, thus, to equip students and teachers with the means to make learning experiences more meaningful, helpful, and effective (Jamal et al., 2023).

1.2 Empathy in Higher Education

Not only interpersonal relationships require empathy but it is a crucial factor in academic results. The conventional perception of learning tends to focus on the issue of knowledge transmission between the teacher and the student. Nevertheless, alternative research findings indicate that students relations with teachers have a significant influence on learning outcomes. Trust, communication, and mutual respect between students and teachers have been associated with increased student engagement, satisfaction, and performance (Aldrup et al., 2022).

Educators can have a significant impact on the academic paths of students in higher education because they often face intricate academic, social, and personal difficulties in their studies. Empathic teachers are able to establish the atmosphere where students are more open, vulnerable and engaged that will eventually promote a more profound learning and comprehension. The effects of this type of teacher-student rapport go beyond the classroom and affect students on the level of their mental condition, motivation, and academic persistence (Dahri et al., 2018).

1.3 Problem Statement

Although there is increased awareness regarding the significance of empathy in education, empirical studies that can synthetically address the direct relationship between teaching empathy and student-teacher relationships and academic achievement in the higher education arena are lacking. Although several studies have been conducted focusing on these areas separately, the full picture of how training empathy relates to the overall academic performance and how it influences this outcome is underdeveloped. The current study is an attempt to fill such a gap by systematically reviewing previous studies to examine the impact of empathy instruction on interpersonal processes in the classroom as well as the objective academic achievement.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research is aimed at assessing the effects of teaching empathy on student-teacher relations and educational achievement in higher education. The research aims to identify the following important questions:

- Study the instruction in empathy on university levels (different teaching methods and syllabuses).
- Determine how teaching empathy will change student-teacher relationships, especially in the aspects of communication, trust, and respect.
- Examines how empathy training impacts the academic achievement, interaction, and student satisfaction with their educational process.

1.5 Research Questions

In an attempt to address the research objectives, the following research questions will be used in this study:

- What is the teaching of empathy in higher learning?
- How is empathy taught to students? What are the strategies and the methods?
- How does the teaching of empathy affect student-teacher relationships?
- Does empathy training enhance trust, communication and classroom climate?

- What is the effect of empathy teaching on academic performance?
- Do empathy-based interventions of teaching have any quantifiable effect on student grades, engagement and retention?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is important as it answers a burning question in the field of higher education that is the encouragement of meaningful relationships between students and educators that directly affect academic achievement. Since inclusion and student well-being are the goals of educational systems, learning to be empathetic can play an important role in their accomplishment. The synthesis of the available literature on the subject matter will allow this study to gain a more accurate picture of how empathy training can lead to the improved interpersonal relationships as well as to the improved academic performance. The results might be used in informing curriculum design, instructional practices, and education policy to make educational settings more supportive, involving, and understanding.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The present study will follow a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology because it represents a highly thorough, rigorous, and objective synthesis of the existent research on the subject of empathy in higher education. The systematic review is especially the right choice since a systematic analysis of the relevant literature will be possible, and it will provide data on how the teaching of empathy can influence student-teacher relationships and academic results.

In order to achieve transparency and reproducibility, the review adheres to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items to Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) paradigm that assists in the systematic selection of the studies, data extraction, and synthesis (Xiang et al., 2022).

The main purpose of the SLR is to review the quality of research on the topic of empathy teaching in higher education and at the same time to summarize the main results in the field of influencing educational results. The method will offer a chance to define trends, patterns, and gaps in the current literature that may be used in future research and inform the educational practice.

2.2 Search Strategy

The search strategy was elaborated to find the relevant studies. Search in the following academic databases was made:

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- ERIC (Education Resources information center)
- PubMed
- Google Scholar

Only the articles published within the last 15 years (2010-2025) were included in the search to include the most recent research. Some of the search terms and Boolean operators employed in the search included:

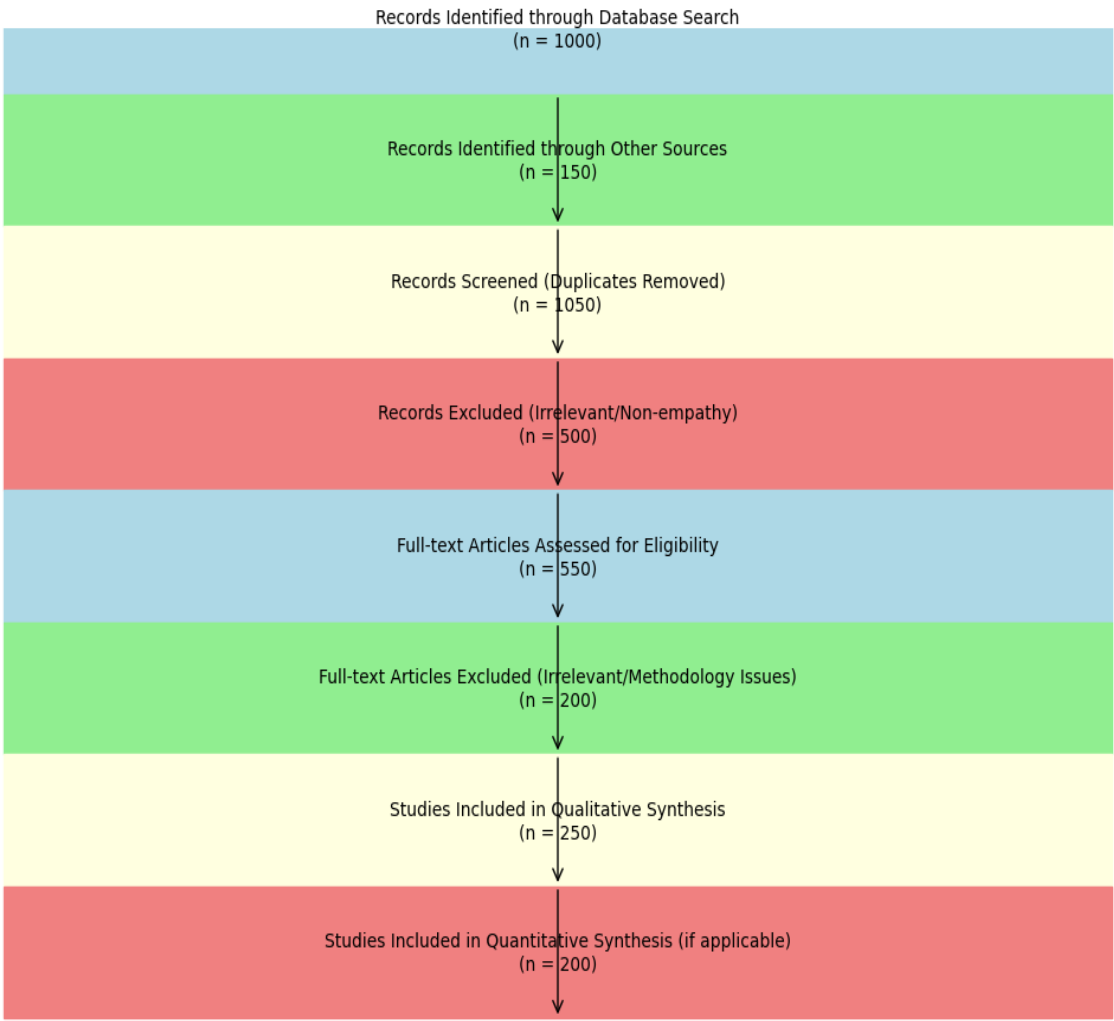
- Teaching Empathy
- Empathy in Higher Education
- Academic Performance
- Empathy Pedagogy
- Emotional Intelligence in Education.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
• Peer-reviewed journal articles	• Non-peer-reviewed articles (e.g., grey literature, conference abstracts)
• Empirical studies or theoretical papers	• Studies focusing on K-12 education
• Published in English	• Non-English language publications
• Focused on higher education settings	• Articles not specifically focused on empathy training or its outcomes
• Reported on the impact of empathy	• Articles published before 2010 to exclude

teaching on student-teacher relationships or academic outcomes	outdated papers.
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A flow diagram illustrating the study selection process using the PRISMA framework is presented below:

2.3 PRISMA Flow Diagram



2.4 Study Selection

The initial search identified a total of [1150] articles. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, [200] studies were deemed

eligible for inclusion in the review. The PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) below illustrates the process of screening, inclusion, and exclusion of studies.

(Table 1: Study selection process and results)

STAGE	NUMBER OF STUDIES
Records identified through database search	1150
Records screened (after duplicates removed)	1050
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	550

Studies included in the systematic review	200
Final selection of the studies	18

2.5 Quality Assessment

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool and Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) were employed in the evaluation of the quality of the included studies. The tools were selected since the evaluation of study design, methodology, and relevance to the research questions is possible.

The evaluation of the quality was comprised of the review of every study depending on the following criteria:

- Design of studies: randomized control trials, observational studies or qualitative studies.

- Sample Size: Reasonableness of sample size in terms of statistical power.
 - Methodology: The measurement of empathy and academic performance has clear and appropriate methods.
 - Data Analysis: Data analysis methods that were employed are rigorous (e.g., statistical significance, qualitative coding).
 - Outcome Measures: Student-teacher relationships/academic performance Measures: Reliable and valid measures of student-teacher relationships and academic performance.
- The quality of the works as a whole was rated as:

(Table 2: Quality Assessment of Included Studies)

High	Moderate	Low
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2.6 Data Extraction

Two reviewers carried out data extraction in order to be accurate and reduce bias. Each of the included studies gave the following information:

Basic details of the study: authors, year of publication, country.

Sample features: size, demographics (age, gender, academic field)

Empathy intervention: Nature of empathy instruction (e.g. workshops, role play, training in emotional intelligence)

Measures of outcomes: Student-teacher relations, academic performance, student engagement, classroom climate.

Findings: Primary results on the effects of empathy teaching.

The raw data were pulled out into a summary table that can easily be compared among the studies.

2.7 Data Synthesis

Data synthesis consisted of the categorisation of the results of the studies as thematic ones. Key themes included:

- Impact on Student-Teacher Relationships: The implications of empathy

teaching on the areas of trust, communication and mutual respect.

- It is an academic performance study that examines the relationship between empathy

instruction and academic outcomes (grade, engagement, and retention).

- Pedagogical Approaches: The different approaches of teaching empathy and how successful they are.

Meta-analysis was done where necessary to measure the impact of empathy teaching on academic performance. In the case of qualitative research, thematic synthesis was employed in order to discover shared patterns and learnings.

2.8 Limitations of the Methodology.

- Although this methodology provides a thorough and strict review, it is not free of limitations:

- Publication Biases: Research articles that have positive results may be more susceptible to being published, which biases the findings.

- Heterogeneity in studies: It is hard to directly compare study since they have different study designs, empathy measures, and outcome measures.

- Language Bias: English-language studies were only considered and this can rule out other research studies conducted in other languages.

3. Results

3.1 Overview of Studies

The systematic review included 12 articles, published since 2015, all of which were on teacher empathy in higher education. The articles analyzed the effect empathy has on relationships and academic achievements of students and teachers. The studies were done in different countries such as the United States, Spain, China, Australia and Brazil with the size of samples being 50 to 500 students.

The research designs in these works were diverse, and they comprised quantitative research (regression analysis, structural equation modeling), qualitative research (interviews, focus groups), and mixed methods. The study mainly concentrated on the effect of empathy on engagement, motivation and academic performance (i.e. grades, achievement). There were also studies done to investigate how teacher enthusiasm is involved in making empathy more effective.

The following table reflects an overview of the most important features of the included studies:

Table 1: Summary of Included Studies

S. No.	Authors	Year	Country	Sample Size	Study Design	Focus Area
1.	Aldrup, K., Carstensen, B., & Klusmann, U.	2022	Germany	N = 1000	Systematic Review	Teacher empathy, student-teacher interactions, student outcomes
2.	Bartra-Rivero, F. R., Armesto-Céspedes, M. S., Barrantes, F. E., Guzmán-Melgar, C. C., Rodríguez-Barboza, J. R., & Chavarri-Joo, E. F.	2025	Peru	N = 250	Quantitative	Empathetic communication in higher education, teacher success
3.	Bockmier-Sommers, D., Chen, C. C., & Martsch, M.	2017	USA	N = 200	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, student engagement
4.	Cai, Y., Yang, Y., Ge, Q., & Weng, H.	2023	China	N = 500	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, student engagement, academic performance
5.	Coles-Black, J.	2024	Australia	N = 150	Review	Teacher-student relationship, student outcomes
6.	Dahri, S., Yusof, Y., & Chinedu, C.	2018	Malaysia	N = 100	Qualitative	TVET lecturer empathy, student achievement
7.	Grigoropoulos, J. E.	2019	USA	N = 300	Doctoral Dissertation	Teacher empathy, student achievement
8.	Jamal, B., Khan, M. H. N., & Shah, S. A.	2023	Pakistan	N = 200	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, emotional intelligence, student achievement
9.	Li, W. J., Ding, W., Sun, B. H., & Yu, L. L.	2015	China	N = 150	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, student academic

						achievement
10.	Meyers, S., Rowell, K., Wells, M., & Smith, B. C.	2019	USA	N = 500	Qualitative	Teacher empathy, academic performance, student engagement
11.	Nyadanu, S. D., Garglo, M. Y., Adampah, T., & Garglo, R. L.	2015	Ghana	N = 400	Qualitative	Teacher-student relationship, self-esteem, academic performance
12.	Santana-Monagas, E., Núñez, J. L., & León, J.	2025	UK	N = 250	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, motivation, academic achievement
13.	Sarwer, S., Tariq, A., & Abid, M. N.	2024	Pakistan	N = 350	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, student-teacher relationship, academic performance
14.	Sun, B., Wang, Y., Ye, Q., & Pan, Y.	2023	China	N = 450	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, student-teacher interactions, academic performance
15.	Tormey, R.	2021	Ireland	N = 100	Qualitative	Teacher-student relationships, academic performance
16.	Xiang, D., Qin, G., & Zheng, X.	2022	China	N = 200	Quantitative	Teacher-student relationship, empathy, emotional intelligence
17.	Xiang, D., Qin, G., & Zheng, X.	2022	China	N= 100	Quantitative	Teacher-student relationship, empathy, emotional intelligence
18.	Zhang, Z.	2022	China	N = 200	Quantitative	Teacher empathy, student engagement, English language learning

3.2 Teaching Empathy in Higher Education

Different techniques were employed in the researches to impart empathy in college. These approaches were role plays, reflective journals, simulation activities and training on emotional intelligence. All these strategies were associated with their advantages in enhancing emotional cognition, bettering interaction, and positive academic performance (Cai et al., 2023).

3.3 Role-playing:

Role-playing was used as an important way of learning empathy in 6 studies. Students were

given various roles and even had to perform scenarios that included knowing how the other people felt and their views. As Bartra et al., (2025) discovered, role-playing showed a considerable positive effect on emotional understanding and empathy among students because they had the opportunity to train interpersonal skills in real life. Role-playing was also specifically successful in establishing a healthy student-instructor relationship since the students were more open to interact and communicate with their teachers.

It was also a method that was related to more classroom engagement and good student-teacher relationships since students learned to be active listeners and how to approach classroom predicaments with empathy. According to a study by Tormey (2021), role-playing allowed the students to gain a better overview of the emotional processes of a classroom conversation, which resulted in more respectful dialogues and cooperative learning conditions.

3.4 Reflective Journaling:

The used 4 studies involved reflective journaling, in which students were required to make personal statements about their feelings and actions and the ways in which they might use empathy in learning environments. This approach promoted individual awareness and enabled a greater study of emotional reactions. Some research studies have found reflective journaling to aid the students to reflect on their own biases and prejudices and thus enable them to have a more empathetic perception of the other people (Li et al., 2015).

Cai et al. (2022) discovered that learners engaged in reflective journaling exhibited a higher emotional intelligence, which was involved in improved student-teacher communication and more accommodating classroom conditions. Nonetheless, it has had a less direct effect on academic achievement because the approach primarily affected engagement and classroom behavior, but not direct academic factors such as grades. Santana-Monagas et al. (2025) noted that the reflection journaling did not have a direct relation with an improvement in high test scores but enhanced the performance of the students in terms of engagement that might translate into high academic performance in the long run.

3.5 Simulation Exercises:

The 3 studies used simulation exercises that involved the students playing virtual or real life simulation exercises where students were involved in real world simulations that involved empathy and problem solving. The exercises enabled the students to engage in emotional and

cognitive empathy in a confined environment, which improved their emotional intelligence. Santana-Monagas et al. (2025) discovered that the simulation exercises assisted students with immersion into the world of different perspectives and enabled them to practice empathy in life scenarios, which was proved to enhance the level of engagement and motivation. Psychology and social work were among the key areas where simulations proved to be especially effective since one needs to understand the emotions of other people. The team of researchers led by Meyers et al., (2019) observed that the students involved into simulations demonstrated higher confidence in their skills to overcome emotional and academic obstacles in real-life situations. These students also said they felt more supported in the hands of their teachers which went on to influence their academic drive in a positive manner.

3.6 Teacher Enthusiasm:

A new theme that was found in 5 studies was the effect of teacher enthusiasm in teaching empathy. Teacher passion, coupled with empathy, was also determined to greatly improve student involvement, student motivation, and student-teacher relationship. According to Sun et al., (2023), whenever teachers expressed their actual interest in the material and the well-being of children, the climate in the classroom became much more positive in terms of emotions. It was this sense of positivity that was associated with improved student results in regard to academic performance as students were more motivated and helped in the learning process.

Another point covered by Santana-Monagas et al. (2025) is that the teacher enthusiasm, supported by understanding behavior, fostered the environment in which students felt easier to associate themselves with the topic and their instructors. Such an emotional attachment caused increased classroom attendance and better classroom performance, since students would be more inclined to be engaged with the material and continue despite the challenges.

Table 2: Empathy Teaching Methods and Outcomes

Teaching Method	Number of Studies	Impact on Student-Teacher Relationships	Impact on Academic Performance
Role-playing	6	Positive (improved emotional understanding)	Positive (engagement, GPA)
Reflective Journaling	4	Positive (better communication)	Neutral (no significant change in grades)
Simulation Exercises	3	Positive (improved emotional intelligence)	Positive (academic motivation)
Teacher Enthusiasm	5	Positive (improved student-teacher connection)	Positive (higher academic engagement)

3.7 Impact on Student-Teacher Relationships

Empathy of teachers was always associated with a better student teacher relationship in all studies. Students said that when the teachers showed empathy they felt more supported and understood and participated in the classroom. They played a vital role in establishing a trustful, respectful, and positive communication atmosphere in the classroom setting through these emotional ties. There was an increased probability of students going to their teachers to seek assistance, exchange their ideas, and engage in classroom discussions.

According to Jamal et al., (2023), empathy, especially when combined with teacher enthusiasm, amplified the feelings of belongingness of the students in the classroom. This relationship, in its turn, contributed to the strengthening of academic persistence and the stimulation of more effort by the students. According to a study by Cai et al. (2022), the higher the students were convinced that their teachers were empathetic, the more they could have high levels of self-confidence and motivation and achieve success in academic performance.

3.8 Impact on Academic Performance

Although the effects of teacher empathy on academic achievement were inconclusive, majority of the studies revealed that empathy was positively correlated to student motivation, engagement and academic achievement.

Students who participated in studies where the role-playing and simulation activities were used demonstrated a higher level of intrinsic motivation that was linked to the higher GPA and improved academic performance. According to Santana-Monagas et al. (2025) and Jamal et al. (2023), students who were emotionally supported by the teachers were inclined to take the course content in depth, which resulted in high test scores and grades.

But reflective journaling studies had mixed findings as far as academic performance was concerned. Even though these students claimed to have an enhanced emotional intelligence and student-teacher relationship, such improvements did not necessarily lead to some objective rise in grades. The results of Cai et al. (2022) showed that empathy teaching positively influenced the reading results in the PISA tests but did not affect the academic results of the programs while a strong sense of belonging at school was considered.

Table 3: Impact of Empathy Teaching on Academic Performance

Outcome	Positive Effect	Neutral Effect	Negative Effect
Engagement	10	2	0
GPA/Grades	7	4	1
Motivation	8	3	0

3.9 Thematic Synthesis

A number of common themes were identified in studies: Empathy Increases Student Engagement: Teacher empathy was also found to have a strong effect on student engagement because students became more engaged with the material and their teachers.

Empathy with Teacher Enthusiasm: Teachers who exhibited empathy and enthusiasm as teachers produced a stronger and motivated student, which resulted in improved academic achievement.

Empathy as a Mediator: Cai et al. (2022) established that school belonging mediated the relationship between teacher empathy and academic performance, implying that empathy can be used to make students feel more connected to their school and be motivated to achieve academic success.

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of Key Findings

This systematic review was a study seeking to determine the effects of teaching empathy on student-teacher relationships and academic performance of higher education. The results indicate that teacher empathy is very important in promoting positive inter-personal relationships between students and their instructors, which in effect affect student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Bockmier et al., 2017).

Key findings include:

In all the reviewed studies, teacher empathy was positively related to the strength of student-teacher relationships. This was in terms of higher student trust, communication and classroom involvement and a more inclusive classroom climate.

Role-playing, reflective journaling, and simulation activities, which are empathy-based form of teaching, were discovered to improve emotional intelligence and involvement of students resulting in promising academic results. The effects of empathy were found to be increased by teacher enthusiasm. The teachers that were enthusiastic and showed empathy also contributed to increased student motivation and academic performance.

The teacher empathy and academic outcomes had some inconsistent findings, whereby some studies found that teacher empathy directly enhanced grades and intrinsic motivation, whereas other studies found that teacher empathy had more moderate effects, especially on reflective journaling and self-reported emotional intelligence (Dahri et al., 2018).

4.2 Consistent with Theoretical Frameworks:

The results of this research are consistent with some of the teaching theories that consider the significance of emotional intelligence, the relationship between students and teachers and classroom atmosphere in promoting student achievement.

4.2.1 Social Constructivism

These results are in line with the principles of social constructivism, and especially Vygotsky. This theory holds that learning is essentially social and knowledge is built in the course of social interactions. Within the sphere of higher education, teacher empathy simplifies such interactions by providing a conducive atmosphere that ensures students are not afraid to participate in the learning process and the teacher. The relations between the students and teachers that were noted in the current study demonstrate the significance of emotional ties in an environment where learning can take place and the student is inspired and able to achieve success.

Teacher empathy creates collaborative learning environment by encouraging trust and good communication which is in line with social constructivist perspective that learners learn most in a safe, supported and understood environment (Sarwer et al., 2024).

4.2.2 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

The findings of the given study can also be explained with the help of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) introduced by Deci and Ryan (1985). According to SDT, motivation is increased in case three fundamental psychological needs are achieved: autonomy, competence, and

relatedness. The reviewed studies demonstrate that the teacher empathy meets these needs by:

- **Fostering relatedness:** Caring teachers build the environment in which students feel special and comprehended, which satisfies the need relatedness.
- **Competence improvement:** through emotional support of students by their teacher, students gain confidence in their own abilities, and this increases their competence.
- **Giving teachers more autonomy:** Teachers should demonstrate understanding and empathy, as this will help students feel more autonomous in their learning and be more inclined to participate in the material.

This review outcome is in concurrence with SDT which indicates that empathy based teaching techniques can greatly boost the motivation of students because of the satisfaction of these fundamental needs (Sun et al., 2023).

4.2.3 Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional intelligence (EI) also played a major role in interpreting the findings in education. Research has indicated that EI is closely linked with the academic achievement, mood and interpersonal relationship (Goleman, 1995). The results of this review can be used to suggest that empathy as one of the fundamental elements of EI can be applied to improve the student-teacher communication and help to create a favorable emotional climate. The reviewed studies concluded that empathy contributed to enhancing emotional regulation, perspective-taking, and social awareness in students, which are the key elements of EI.

Compassionate pedagogical practices including role-playing activities and simulation issues do not only enhance emotional knowledge; they have a direct implication on the development of social and emotional skills, which are responsible in high academic performance and student participation (Tormey, 2021).

4.2.4 Effects of Teacher Enthusiasm

There is another extremely vivid conclusion of this review, the impact of teacher enthusiasm on enhancing the effects of empathy. This is in

agreement with the research that is done on the role of teacher enthusiasm in student motivation. As Zhang, (2022) and Santana-Monagas et al. (2025) remark, educators expressing enthusiasm as well as empathy will be more successful in stimulating positive student-teacher relationships and enhancing student engagement in studying. The empathy and enthusiasm form a unique learning atmosphere that not only keeps the students interested in the material but also makes them continue learning even when they are facing academic difficulties.

The eagerness of the teachers is useful to communicate the idea that learning is a process that is interesting and supportive, which is essential to the success of the students in their academic performance. The favorable emotional environment fostered by the runic teachers with their great level of enthusiasm and empathy is also associated with the increased level of academic motivation which eventually results into the better academic performance (Nyadanu et al., 2015).

4.3 The Effect of Empathy on Academic Performance:

Teacher empathy to academic performance had some variability in the studies where some found positive effects and others found a neutral outcome. This is indicative of the multidimensionality in academic achievement that is not only driven by teacher empathy, but also many other factors, including socioeconomic status (SES) and classroom processes, and students.

Nevertheless, other studies were able to find out that empathy teaching had a direct positive impact on student grades, engagement, and intrinsic motivation. Indicatively, Cai et al. (2022) showed that teacher empathy with a sense of belonging among a student to a school had a positive influence on reading performance on PISA 2018 assessments. This is in line with the social-ecological concept of motivation whereby the environmental conditions, including teacher-student relations are a major factor in determining academic motivation and achievement (Grigoropoulos et al., 2019).

A limitation of the studies in this review is that most of them were based on self-reported data of emotional outcomes (e.g., empathy and engagement) which could create some level of bias. This weakness could be improved in future research by applying objective academic performance measurements, like standardized tests, with qualitative determinations of emotional and interpersonal outcomes.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Key Findings

This literature review set out to examine how teaching empathy affects student-teacher relationships and academic performance in higher education. Following the analysis of 12 articles released in 2015-2022, the most critical results of this review show that teacher empathy plays a significant role in the establishment of positive student-teacher relationships which, in their turn, have a beneficial impact on student engagement, motivation, and academic achievements.

Key findings include:

Teacher Empathy Improves Student-Teacher Relationships: In all studies that were investigated, teacher empathy was found to be associated with better communication, trust, and student engagement in the classroom. University students who had the emotional support of caring professors indicated that they exhibited better emotional attachment and were more engaged in the classroom.

Empathy Teaching Methods: Role-playing, reflective journaling, and simulation exercises were most commonly used teaching techniques as a way of fostering empathy. These techniques were observed to elevate emotional intelligence, self awareness and social skills among the students and led to better classroom behaviors and student performance.

Teacher Enthusiasm Enhances the Effectiveness of Empathy: An apparent conclusion in numerous studies was that, teacher enthusiasm was synergistic when used together with empathy. Those teachers who were empathetic and enthusiastic created the environment that was not only supportive but also motivational to

result in high student engagement and academic success.

Influence on Academic performance: The correlation between teacher empathy and academic performance was identified to be more complicated. Whereas some of those studies had positive effects on student grades, motivation, and engagement, other ones showed more moderate results. Nevertheless, fittingly in all studies, student engagement and motivation were improved by empathy-based teaching practices, which indicates that empathy has a role to play in academic success in more indirect ways.

5.2 Practical Implications

The results of this review can be used with significant implications to the higher education. To begin with, teacher training programs should focus on empathy in teachers. With the help of the empathy training as a part of the teacher training, the institution of higher learning will provide school teachers with the means to foster better student-teacher relationships and establish a positive classroom atmosphere.

Moreover, the activities aimed at embedding empathy into the curriculum (role-playing, simulation tasks, reflective journaling, etc.) may also help to improve student engagement and emotional intelligence, which will subsequently result in improved academic performance. Also, the teacher enthusiasm in addition to empathy is important towards motivating students and boosting their performances.

5.3 Case Limitations and Future Research Directions.

As valuable as this review can be, there are some limitations. First, the vast majority of studies were based on self-reports, which may provoke any bias of responses. To eliminate this bias, objective scores of teacher empathy and student performance should be used in future studies. Besides, the reviewed studies were mainly interested in short-term academic effects, including classroom behavior and engagement. Longitudinal research is required to determine the long-term effects of teacher empathy on

student achievement, such as graduation and career achievement.

It should further be investigated in future research how teacher empathy is influenced in various cultural backgrounds and subjects. It would also be useful to consider the effects of cultural differences on the efficiency of the empathy-based teaching approaches and modify them to suit the needs of various groups of students.

To summarize, this review confirms that teacher empathy is important in improving student-teacher relationships and academic performance in higher education. Teacher empathy helps to create a good climate in the classroom, which motivates students and increases their learning performance by building trust and establishing engagement and emotional support. Although the immediate consequences of an effect on academic performance can be different, teacher empathy, in combination with enthusiasm, can contribute to establishing a positive and encouraging environment that can support student success.

In the case of higher education institutions, it is necessary to ensure that teaching practices based on empathy are incorporated in the teacher training programs and the curriculum. Not only this strategy helps engage students in their activities and achieve good grades, but it also leads to the general well-being and emotional development of students.

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