

THE LEVEL OF EMPATHY IN STUDENTS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS, METHODS, AND TRAINING BASICS TO ENHANCE IT

Farangis Yangibayeva

2nd-year student, Psychology major

Scientific Advisor:

[Name Surname], [Position, Department]

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Introduction

Empathy is not only a vital emotion in interpersonal relationships, but also a core component of social consciousness, culture, and interpersonal intelligence. The student age is a particularly active period for the development of this ability. A pressing issue today is the low level of empathy among students and the need to develop effective psychological approaches to enhance it.

Relevance:

Increasing communication problems, stress, aggression, and social isolation among young people make empathy a key skill that can help alleviate these issues.

Theoretical Foundations

The concept of empathy was first introduced to science by Edward Titchener, who explained it in the context of experiencing works of art. In modern psychology, empathy has been studied in depth by the following scholars:

Carl Rogers – considered empathetic listening a central method in therapy.

Daniel Goleman – identified empathy as a component of “emotional intelligence.”

Martin Hoffman – explained the ontogenesis of empathy, i.e., how it develops from birth.

Empathy is studied from two main approaches:

1. Phenomenological (based on subjective feelings)
2. Cognitive (based on mental analysis of others' thoughts and feelings)

Both approaches provide different methods for understanding and responding to the emotions of others.

1. Phenomenological Empathy

This approach is based on fully feeling the emotions of another person. It involves deeply immersing oneself in another's emotional state, attempting to “step into their shoes.” This is a subjective process that connects the observer’s feelings with those of the other person.

Key point: You attempt to fully feel and experience another person’s emotions.

Example: Witnessing someone’s sadness and internally experiencing that sadness yourself.

2. Cognitive Empathy

This approach relies on intellectual understanding of another’s emotions without necessarily feeling them personally. It involves rational and analytical processing of another’s emotional state or point of view.

Key point: You understand the person’s emotions intellectually, without internalizing them.

Example: Listening to someone describe their grief and understanding their pain, but viewing it from a more rational perspective.

Conclusion:

Phenomenological empathy is based on emotionally experiencing others' feelings.

Cognitive empathy involves understanding others' feelings and responding mentally.

Both types complement each other—cognitive empathy helps assess others’ states and respond appropriately, while phenomenological empathy deepens emotional connection.

Factors Influencing Empathy Levels

The following factors influence the level of empathy (based on the table in the original):

1. Personal Characteristics

An individual’s temperament, character, and psychological maturity affect their ability to empathize. Emotionally open, extroverted individuals are usually more sensitive to others' feelings.

2. Family Environment

Warmth, affection, and understanding in early family life significantly shape empathy development. Children raised in supportive families tend to be more compassionate and understanding.

3. Social Experience

Actively participating in social life and interacting with diverse people enhances empathy, as individuals learn to understand different emotional expressions.

4. Psychological Maturity

People with developed emotional intelligence who can recognize and manage their own emotions are more capable of understanding others' emotions and engaging in empathetic interactions.

Practical Research

Objective:

To assess, analyze, and suggest ways to enhance empathy among second-year students.

Participants:

50 second-year students (25 female, 25 male) from a university in Tashkent.

Method:

Empathy levels were measured using Boyko's method (36-item questionnaire). Scores were evaluated based on total points.

Results:

11 students showed high empathy (22%)

27 had moderate levels (54%)

12 showed low empathy (24%)

Females showed higher empathy levels compared to males, linked to biological and social factors.

Psychological Training Program to Enhance Empathy (Sample)

Training Title: "I Feel You!"

Objective:

To develop students' empathy and active listening skills.

Modules:

1. Introductory Psychodrama (5–7 minutes) – acting in another's role
2. Conflicting Emotions Exercise – showing empathy in a challenging situation
3. Paired Conversation – using active listening and reflection techniques
4. "I Understand You" Task
5. Reflection – expressing and writing down feelings

The training lasted for 3 weeks, with 45-minute sessions twice a week. Post-training assessment showed increased empathy levels in 66% of participants.

Conclusion

Research shows that empathy plays a crucial role in personal development. It is shaped by individual, social, and cognitive factors. To foster empathy in students, training, discussions, practical exercises, and emotional expression freedom are essential. A supportive psychological environment is key to cultivating empathy.

Recommendations

1. Organize regular psychological training sessions for students.
2. Encourage extracurricular activities aimed at empathy development.
3. Include topics on emotional intelligence in the academic curriculum.
4. Promote group work and discussion culture in the classroom.

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