



**Empathy in the Classroom: Social Psychological Insights into Teachers' Support for Students Facing Social Challenges in Selected Primary Schools in Addis Ababa**

**By  
Gelila Tesfaye Belayneh**

**Advisor: Professor Habtamu Wondimu**

A Thesis submitted to College of Education & Behavioral Studies School of Psychology of Addis Ababa University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Psychology

October 2025  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



**Empathy in the Classroom: Social Psychological Insights  
into Teachers' Support for Students Facing Social  
Challenges in Selected Primary Schools in Addis Ababa**

**By Gelila Tesfaye**

**Advisor: Prof. Habtamu Wondimu**

A Thesis submitted to College of Education & Behavioral  
Studies School of Psychology of Addis Ababa University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Social Psychology

October 2025  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

I the undersigned, declare that this study entitle “Empathy in the Classroom: Social Psychological Insights into Teachers’ Support for Sy own work. I have undertaken the research work independently with the guidanctudents Facing Social Challenges in Selected Primary Schools in Addis Ababa” is me and support of the research advisor.

Declared By:

Name: Gelila Tesfaye

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: October 2025

Place Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Advisor: Professor Habtamu Wondimu

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Addis Ababa University

College of Education & Behavioral Studies

School of Psychology

This is to certify that the thesis, prepared by Gelila Tesfaye entitled “Empathy in the Classroom: Social Psychological Insights into Teachers’ Support for Students Facing Social Challenges in Selected Primary Schools in Addis Ababa” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Psychology, with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the Examining Committee:

Internal Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

External Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Department of Graduate Program Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

## Acknowledgments

The completion of this thesis, from its initial data gathering stages to its final submission, has been a journey made possible by the support and guidance of many individuals. I am profoundly grateful for every contribution. Above all, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to God, whose grace and strength sustained me throughout my academic endeavors.

My deepest appreciation goes to my advisor, **Professor Habtamu Wondimu**, for his invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and continuous encouragement.

My sincere thanks to **Ato Desta Araya** (Education Bureau) & Ato **Zenawi** (Kirkos Sub-City Education Officer) for data sharing and assistance. Special thanks to the participants vice principals of both schools, **Wro. Eyerusalem Adugna** and **Wro. Mebrate**. I am particularly indebted to **Wro. Eyerusalem Adugna** for her exceptional support from the very beginning. For her meticulous effort in proofreading and offering invaluable suggestions, I extend my gratitude to **Sr. Immaculate Nyamwiza**. Her undivided support was truly appreciated.

Finally, and most profoundly, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved husband. His constant encouragement, unwavering support, and understanding through the difficult situations I encountered were the base that enabled me to persevere and complete this work. Last but not least, I thank my two wonderful boys, who graciously sacrificed their time during this thesis preparation. You are my strength and my hope, and I am eternally grateful for your understanding and love. This thesis would not have been possible without my family.

# Abstract

This study examines how primary government school teachers in Addis Ababa use empathy to help students who face social challenges. Many children who move to the city face difficulties like neglect, abuse, and heavy housework, affecting their learning. The main aim of the research is to address the situation in educator's understanding of their students and being empathetic in the classroom.

Information was gathered from the students and teachers through interviews, group discussion, and empathy scale to conduct the study. The research was conducted in two government primary schools in Addis Ababa, Kirkos Sub-City: Meserete Ethiopia and Worha Yekatit Pre-Primary, Primary and Middle Schools. The collected data show that students' difficulties and burdens lead them to tardiness, absenteeism and emotional distress. As the research indicates these children get material and emotional supports from female teachers but lack of counseling services lead them to be not effective at school and they made it clear that they need teachers' support and understanding. Finally, the study concludes explaining how teachers' empathy is important for students holistic development and for this intervention is recommended of teachers' awareness of the students' background capacity. Finally, students excel if the school prepares a place where children share their problems such as Guidance & Counseling program.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Acronyms.....	7
CHAPTER ONE:.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Background of the study.....	10
Statement of the Problem.....	12
Research Objectives.....	13
Research Questions.....	13
Significance of the Study.....	14
Delimitation of the Study.....	15
Limitations of the Study.....	16
Definition of Concepts.....	16
Empathy.....	16
Social Challenges.....	17
Teacher Support.....	17
Vulnerable Students.....	17
Classroom Environment.....	17
Academic Achievement.....	17
Cultural Context.....	18
Relatives.....	18
CHAPTER TWO: Related Literature Review.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Conceptualizing Empathy.....	19
Empathy in Education.....	20
Types of Teacher Support.....	22
Social Challenges Faced by Students.....	23
Theoretical Framework.....	24
Identifying Gaps.....	25
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology.....	28
Introduction.....	28
Research Design.....	28
Study Setting.....	29
Population and Sampling.....	30
Data Collection Instruments.....	31
Qualitative Tool:.....	31
Quantitative Tool: Teachers' Empathy Scale.....	31
Pilot Testing.....	32
Data Collection Procedures.....	33
Procedures of Data Analysis.....	33

Qualitative Data.....	34
Quantitative Data.....	34
Ethical Considerations.....	35
Summary.....	36
CHAPTER FOUR: Findings and Analysis.....	37
Introduction.....	37
Participant Demographics.....	38
Student Participants.....	38
Teachers Participants.....	40
Focus Group Discussion (FGD).....	42
<i>Theme 1: Balancing School and Responsibilities</i> .....	43
<i>Theme 2: Challenges in School</i> .....	44
<i>Theme 3: Perceptions of Teachers’ Support</i> .....	44
<i>Theme 4: Impact of Teacher Empathy</i> .....	45
<i>Theme 5: Suggestions for Improvement</i> .....	46
The Burden of Dual Roles.....	47
Emotional Impact of Displacement.....	47
Varied Experiences of Teacher Support.....	47
Semi Structured Interview.....	48
Findings and Analysis of Semi-Structured Interview.....	49
<i>Theme 1: Challenges Students Face</i> .....	49
<i>Theme 2: Teachers Empathy and Support</i> .....	49
<i>Theme 3: Impact of Teachers Support</i> .....	50
<i>Theme 4: System-Level Needs</i> .....	50
Empathy Scale.....	51
Descriptive Statistics of Empathy.....	51
Interpretation.....	52
CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion.....	54
Female Teachers’ Support.....	55
Structural Barriers’ to Empathic Practice.....	55
CHAPTER SIX:.....	56
Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	56
Summary:.....	56
Conclusion:.....	57
Recommendations:.....	57
References.....	59
Appendix 1: Consent Forms.....	62
Appendix 2: Questioners.....	65

## List of Tables

Table 1: Students' Profile of Meserete Ethiopia & Worha Yekatit Schools.....	39
Table 2: Meserete Ethiopia Teachers' Profile.....	41
Table 3: Worha Yekatit Teachers' Profile.....	41
Table 4: Students Responsibilities.....	43
Table 5: Academic Barriers.....	44
Table 6: Teachers' Responsiveness.....	45
Table 7: Detail Explanation of Codes.....	48
Table 8: Table of Descriptive Statistics.....	52
Table 9: Empathy Scores by Schools.....	52

# Acronyms

- AAU Addis Ababa University
- FGDs Focus Group Discussions
- ME Meserete Ethiopia
- MET Meserete Ethiopia Teachers
- MoE Ministry of Education
- PGDT Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching
- WYK Worha Yekatit
- WYKT Worha Yekatit Teachers

# CHAPTER ONE:

## Introduction

Education is not just sharing facts and information; it is helping students grow holistically. At the core of this lies empathy to support the teaching learning process and to create understanding between teachers and students. As Aldrup, Carstensen, and Klusmann (2022) puts it, empathy is a very promising factor in understanding excellent teacher-student interactions, particularly when it comes to provide students with emotional support and thus, helping them develop. Moreover Ethiopian Education and Training Road map (2020) elaborates on this, stating,

In Ethiopia, education is conceived as a life to be lived and a way of preparing the youth for future living. It is an instrument of cultivating the individual holistically, including one's moral, cognitive, social, spiritual, physical, psychological and vocational attributes. (p. 29)

Education in Ethiopia seen as a pathway to a better future, Families mostly send their children to urban centers like Addis Ababa for quality education. But this promise of education is replaced by exploitation and neglect for those children coming from rural areas frequently burdened with domestic work, deprived their rights to learn properly and subjected to unwanted mental pain, bullying and isolation.

Even though school teachers have responsibilities in helping these children with challenges the reality is not like that. Therefore, it is essential for educators to recognize and promote empathetic practices for all students, particularly those coming from rural areas and facing challenges,.

## Background of the study

The main part of this study is understanding the concept of empathy. Smeenk, Sturm, Terken, and Eggen (2019) state that “Empathy, the ability to genuinely understand and share the emotions and experiences of others, is essential for fostering meaningful interpersonal relationships:” (p. 2). Furthermore, teacher empathy is widely recognized for its strong relation with the positive development of both students and teachers (Ge, Li, Chen, Kayani, & Qin, 2021). In the context of education, empathetic teachers create supportive learning environments that promote students, academic stability. According to Hockenbury and Hockenbury (2008), showing empathy in the classroom is essential for creating a good educational environment where students feel supported and valued. However, in Ethiopia, where rapid growth and economic differences affect classroom dynamics, empathy becomes even more important. It is essential for teachers to show understanding to help such kind of students feel accepted and get the support they need to succeed in life.

In Ethiopia, education is highly valued, and parents in the rural areas send their children to the capital city to relatives so they get good education. But, some children migrating from rural to urban areas like Addis Ababa, face too many challenges like exploitation and abuse by relatives who promise to give them educational opportunities but instead burden them with domestic chores. The abuse leads these children to irregular school attendance, mental torment, bullying and isolation and finally the children stop learning. When this situation occurs it is the responsibility of teachers to support students in

schools through empathetic practices. However, it is common to see some these children are unnoticed and some teachers might observe them in the classroom.

The current structure of the Ethiopian education system comprises a two-year pre-primary phase (ages 5-6), a six-year primary phase (ages 7-12), a two-year middle school phase (ages 13-14), a four-year secondary school phase (ages 15-18) and three to four years of tertiary education (MoE, 2024). Addis Ababa offers a diverse range of educational institutions including government, private, religious, community, and international institutions. Government schools, the primary providers of free primary education, play an important role in bringing social equity.

Understanding the specific challenges faced by these students is essential in developing effective interventions. Teachers are responsible for creating supportive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of their students (Ministry of Education, 2020). By focusing on the role of teachers' empathy, this study demonstrates its importance in improving the educational experiences of vulnerable students with social challenges.

This thesis focuses on two primary government schools in Kirkos Sub-City, Addis Ababa, where students who came from rural areas face social challenges. By exploring how teachers use empathy to support these students, the research contribute to the literature for many discipline in Ethiopia.

## Statement of the Problem

In Addis Ababa, a growing number of children are migrating from rural areas, often brought by relatives under the promise of educational opportunities. This phenomenon reflects broader socio-economic challenges within Ethiopia, where families seek better futures for their children. However, rather than receiving the education they were promised, some of these children are burdened with household chores. The psychological stress of these children is critical, as stable emotional development is essential for effective learning.

Teachers play a vital role in shaping students' educational experiences; however, the focus on academic performance often dominates the need for emotional support. "Research indicates that empathetic teachers can bring students' social and emotional well-being, thereby improving their overall academic performance," (Kassin et al., 2017).

Despite Ethiopia's commitment to provide equitable and quality education for all children, the effective use of empathy by teachers in the classroom to support vulnerable students is not consistently exercised. This presents a crucial challenge, as existing research has not adequately explored how empathy shapes teachers' support strategies in this specific context. This gap hinders the development of effective intervention mechanisms to improve the educational experiences of these vulnerable students, particularly those coming from rural areas and facing social challenges. Therefore, this research seeks to address a crucial gap by exploring the role of teachers' empathy in supporting students from vulnerable backgrounds in selected primary government schools in Kirkos Sub City, Addis Ababa. By investigating how teachers employ empathy

to mitigate these challenges, the study aims to create impact to many parts in educational practices in Ethiopia.

## Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate how primary school teachers in selected government schools in Addis Ababa apply empathy to support students facing social challenges. To achieve this, the research will address the following objectives:

1. To explore teachers' conceptualization and demonstration of empathy in their roles.
2. To identify the social challenges faced by students, as perceived by both teachers and students themselves.
3. To investigate the specific strategies employed by empathetic teachers.
4. To examine the perceived influence of teacher empathy on students' academic performance, social-emotional well-being, and overall school experiences.
5. To identify factors that influence teachers' empathetic practices and to understand how these challenges affect students' schooling.

## Research Questions

This study will address the following listed research questions to gain a deeper understanding of the role of teachers' empathy in the selected government schools in supporting vulnerable students,

- Do teachers demonstrate empathy in their interactions with students facing social challenges? How?

- What social challenges do students face and how do these challenges affect them?
- What specific strategies do teachers implement to support students who are struggling with social, emotional, and academic difficulties? How does it affect the performance of the vulnerable children's overall development?

## Significance of the Study

This study, within the fields of social psychology and education, addresses the limited research on teachers' empathy within the Ethiopian context. By investigating and showing the gap of teachers' empathy and its effects on students facing social challenges, this research has an input to several important areas and insights that can inform both theory and practice.

The findings will equip teachers with a deeper understanding of the importance of empathy in teaching. The study serves as a practical guide for enhancing classroom practices that foster emotional support and academic success.

Additionally, the findings may encourage school administrators to prioritize emotional support in their educational strategies. Recognizing the role of teachers' empathy can lead to the development of school policies that foster a compassionate educational environment for all students.

Through focusing on the social challenges faced by students in these two schools, the study adds value to broader discussions on educational equity and social justice. It underscores the necessity for responsive teaching practices that cater to the needs of disadvantaged students within the local context.

In summary, while this research focuses on teachers empathy in two selected schools in Addis Ababa, its insights aim to bring positive changes that raise awareness to all teachers in the educational settings contributing more understanding.

## Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to two selected government primary schools in Kirkos Sub-city, specifically Woreda 04 (Worha Yekatit) and Woreda 05 (Meserete) pre-primary, primary, & middle schools, Addis Ababa. The research focuses on students facing social challenges, as identified by the schools through purposive sampling methods. This selection process ensures that the study addresses the experiences of children facing social difficulties rather than including the entire student population.

The scope of the study excludes in-depth exploration of family-related issues or other broader social problems beyond those reported by the schools. The identified challenges will be based on data provided by the schools, allowing for an investigation into the specific social challenges faced by these students within the educational environment.

By concentrating on these specific parameters, the study targets to provide a detailed and in-depth examination of teachers' empathy in relation to the social challenges faced by the selected students, ensuring that the research remains manageable and relevant to the defined objectives.

## Limitations of the Study

While this study, provides meaningful insights into teachers' empathy and its impact on students facing social challenges, it has limitations. . The research is looked only in two specific schools in Kirkos Sub-City (Woreda 04: Worha Yekatit and Worda 05 Meserete Ethiopia) which limits the generalization of the findings. Socio-economic and cultural influences such as poverty, family dynamics, and community context were not directly measured though they play a crucial role in shaping student behavior. In addition, the short data collection period may have restricted the ability to observe the patterns in teachers' empathy. These limitations suggest the findings should be interpreted with caution and highlight areas for future research.

## Definition of Concepts

### Empathy

- o “The ability of teachers to understand, share and respond to the feelings and experiences of students with social challenges, facilitating emotional connections that contribute to a supportive learning environment and understand the situations they are in” (Kassin, et al., 2017).

Cognitive Empathy refers to “the ability to understand another person’s perspective or mental state” (Kassin, et al., 2017)

“Affective Empathy means an empathy that involves sharing or mirroring the emotions of others” (Kassin, et al., 2017).

For this study, empathy is as measured by the Empathy Scale.

## Social Challenges

- o Difficulties faced by children or students coming from rural areas related to their social interactions, emotional well-being, and academic performance, as reported by the students. Challenges that these children face, like exploitation and abuse.

## Teacher Support

- o When teachers take action to assist students to overcome their difficulties in every way. When they try to understand the reason behind their behaviors in the classroom such as arriving late, coming to school without doing their homework, or when they are absent and when teachers provide encouragement and help and promote classroom atmosphere to the best of their ability using different forms.

## Vulnerable Students

- o Students who came from rural area with false promises of education and experience difficulty and facing exploitation or neglect.

## Classroom Environment

- o The overall atmosphere in a classroom, symbolized by the student teacher interactions, relationships between peers, the condition that affect the teaching learning process.

## Academic Achievement

- o The performance of students in the school when measured through grades, test scores, and overall progress in the learning process of the final result.

## Cultural Context

- o The background of students social, economic, and culture and educational setting in Addis Ababa, that influences students experiences and the challenges they face.

## Relatives

- o Caregivers of some of the students addressed by the children. They only know that their caregivers are relatives nothing more. These caregivers might be uncles, aunts, distant relatives, or no relation at all but addressed by the children as such.

# CHAPTER TWO: Related Literature Review

## Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to empathy, its role in education, and the specific challenges faced by students in the selected government primary schools, Addis Ababa. The chapter structured to explore the concepts of empathy, its application in educational settings, the types of teacher support, and the social challenges faced by students. It also examines the theoretical frameworks guiding this study and identifies gaps in existing literature. The review integrates both global perspectives and contextual insights from Ethiopia, highlighting the unique socio-cultural dynamics that influence teacher student relationships.

## Conceptualizing Empathy

Empathy is a multifaceted construct that encompasses both cognitive and affective dimensions. As Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2017 states, “it is understanding or vicariously experiencing another individual’s perspective and feeling sympathy and compassion for that individual.” (P. 416). It is a foundational skill that supports the development of healthy social behavior and helps sustain meaningful interpersonal connections (Ge, Gu, & Yang, 2021). This study highlights the two key dimensions of empathy, cognitive and affective empathy, as essential to understand teachers’ empathy towards students with social challenges. According to Zhou (2022), Cognitive empathy refers to “ a kind of knowledge, a tuning in, an imaginative reconstruction, and a perspective taking of the subject which allows for the seeing of the world through the

eyes of the latter” and affective empathy is “experiencing the feelings of another person” (p.2). Both types of empathy help teachers create better ways of teaching that support students’ feelings and social needs. This is especially important in schools, where a teacher’s ability to understand how students feel can affect how they help them. In the context of education, empathy enables teachers to create classrooms where students feel valued, understood, and supported. Hockenbury and Hockenbury (2008) emphasize that “fostering empathy in the classroom is essential for nurturing vulnerable students.” However, the application of empathy in teaching requires a balance between academic demands and emotional responsiveness, particularly in Ethiopia.

## Empathy in Education

Empathy plays a critical role in education, particularly in creating positive teacher student relationships and addressing students’ social and emotional needs. Cooper (2011) stated that “deeper levels of empathy require individual attention, time, and frequency of interaction” (p. 8). He further emphasizes that the role of empathy in teaching will enhance affective connection, learning and moral development and teachers also engage in a deep form of attentive listening and response if and when developing emotional empathy to students. (Cooper, 2011) “Research has shown that empathetic teachers enhance student motivation, reduce behavioral issues, and promote a sense of belonging” (Aggarwal, 2008). For example, Tunnell (2008) found that empathetic teachers improve students’ achievement by providing constructive feedback, offering emotional support, and creating a positive classroom climate.

In Ethiopia where students came across social challenges such as poverty, cultural dislocation, and exploitation. The role of empathetic teachers becomes even more . (Gable and Reishit (2007) highlights that “empathetic teachers promote students’ social-emotional development by validating their experiences and responding with compassion.” This, in turn, leads to improved social skills, reduced stress, and increased resilience among students.

However, some teachers struggle to balance academic demands with the emotional needs of their students prioritizing content over connection. While dedication to teaching is essential, and some teachers strive to create empathetic classrooms, it is equally important for educators to cultivate empathy and actively listen to their students' concerns and experiences. By taking the time to understand and respond to their students' emotions, teachers can create a supportive and effective learning environment. This involves not only addressing academic needs but also acknowledging and addressing students' social and emotional challenges. As Bandura (1977) stated “in resource-constrained settings, large class sizes, few resources, and different challenges often hinder teachers’ ability to provide individualized support.” Despite these challenges, empathetic teachers can serve as role models, demonstrating caring and supportive behaviors that students can emulate.

## Types of Teacher Support

Teachers provide various forms of support to address students' academic, emotional, and social needs. According to Muijs and Reynolds (2011) in their book *Effective Teaching: Evidence and Practice*, “teacher can support students emotionally, give support towards students' academic performance, and social and instrumental support. Teachers can create a warm and inclusive classroom environment where students feel safe and valued. They can provide emotional support by showing care, understanding and empathy towards students feeling which help those students facing social challenges feel understood and accepted. Aldrup et al. (2022) affirm that “teachers' affective empathy motivates them to react sensitively to their students' emotional needs, provide comfort, and encouragement” (p. 18).

Providing clear instructions, constructive feedback and additional resources to help those children who have social challenge help to get academically excel. . Zhou (2022) notes that empathetic teachers adjust their strategies to meet individual student needs and learning styles contributing to increase motivation and engagement. When teachers provide academic support adapting teaching methods to meet diverse learning needs and offering extra help to students who are struggling, students will have the opportunity to reach their potential.

Social support includes helping students connect with peers and life. If teachers give social support to students who alienate themselves from the school community, students build positive relationship with their peers and help to face challenging situations. This type of support is very important to help students with social challenges

to have a sense of belonging within the classroom. Beside the above-mentioned supports providing practical assistance/ instrumental support like school supplies, access to resources and others is critical to participate fully in schools. Aramudin and Susanti (2024) showed that students exposed to empathy infused lessons demonstrated behaviors like active listening, emotional sharing, and respect for different opinions.

In Addis Ababa’s government schools, these forms of support are essential for addressing the unique challenges faced by students, particularly those who came from rural areas. These students burdened with house work, leading to irregular school attendance and stress. Empathetic teachers who provide support can help mitigate these challenges and improve students’ classroom situation. Building on this understanding, Zhou (2022) highlights that empathetic teachers are better equipped to understand and respond to the unique needs of their students, which in turn enhances student engagement and fosters self-regulated learning within a supportive classroom environment.

## Social Challenges Faced by Students

Many students in Addis Ababa’s government schools face social challenges that hinder their academic performance not to excel. These challenges include poverty, strained family relationships, cultural dislocation, bullying, and social isolation. A large number of these students come from low-income families and struggle to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and learning materials—needs that schools often step in to partially meet. As Cooper (2011) emphasizes, “*empathy fosters students’ sense of belonging and engagement even under difficult circumstances*” (p. 10), underscoring the crucial role of emotionally attuned teaching in such settings.

Students who migrate from rural areas to urban schools often encounter cultural shock and language barriers, which can make it difficult for them to adapt or feel a sense of belonging. Many are brought to the city under misleading promises of education but are instead subjected to domestic labor and exploitation. These students often arrive at school exhausted, distracted, and emotionally distressed, with inconsistent attendance and limited energy for learning. In addition, some face neglect in their personal care due to household burdens, leading to behaviors perceived as unusual or withdrawn.

These vulnerabilities make them targets for bullying and deepen their sense of isolation and low self-esteem. In some cases, students may even adopt bullying behaviors as a defense mechanism. In such complex environments, empathetic teachers who recognize and respond to these lived realities can make a transformative difference helping students feel seen, supported, and capable of succeeding both academically and socially.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by three key theoretical frameworks, which are social cognitive theory, self-determination theory, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Bandura (1977) said Social Cognitive Theory suggests, individuals learn through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In educational context students learn not only from their teachers' instruction but also from their modeling of empathy and supportive behaviors. (Ryan & Deci, 2000) emphasizes that self-determination theory is the idea that people are more motivated when they feel in control and do things because they truly want to. Empathetic teachers foster intrinsic motivation by creating supportive learning

environments that meet students' psychological need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By addressing students' emotional and social needs, teachers can enhance their motivation and engagement in learning. Ge et al. (2021) also explains that teacher beliefs about student capability influence their empathetic motivation. Teachers with a growth mindset are more inclined to adopt responsive emotional supportive stance for students facing social challenges.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory highlights the interplay between individual, relational and systemic factors in shaping students' experiences. Bronfenbrenner also suggested "it emphasizes the importance of considering the broader socio-cultural context in understanding the challenges faced by students and the role of teachers in addressing these challenges" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).this framework is relevant for this study where students' experiences are influenced by family factors. It provides a foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which teacher empathy influences student outcome highlighting the importance of considering the broader socio-cultural context in which teacher-student interaction occur.

## Identifying Gaps

Although the importance of teachers' empathy and support is widely acknowledged in literature and has been studied in Western contexts several critical gaps are seen. Much of the existing research focuses on Western contexts There needs to have more research that shows the role of teachers' empathy in contexts with social-cultural and educational challenges such as Ethiopia as there is limited research in this context.

Existing studies often overlook the cultural and systematic factors that shape teachers' empathetic practices and it is culture specific.

Key gaps in the literature includes -

- There is a contextual gap. Most studies on teacher empathy conducted in developed countries leaving a need for research in socio-cultural contexts like Ethiopia. The cultural norms, educational systems, and social challenges in Ethiopia differ totally from those in Western contexts.
- Not many studies focus on vulnerable children, like those from rural to urban children facing exploitation. These children face challenges that needs interventions and support.
- Most research needs to explore the underlying mechanisms and long-term impacts of empathetic teachers and students' relationships. This includes understanding how empathy influences students' academic performance.
- Assigned teachers who do not take formal teachers training particularly in pedagogy, child development or psychology affect their ability to empathize and address the social challenges faced by their students. Those teachers from applied sciences mostly do not take the above mentioned courses, will have difficulty to understand and address emotional and psychological needs in the classroom.

In conclusion, this chapter has reviewed the literature on empathy, its role in education, and the specific challenges faced by students in Addis Ababa's government primary schools. The review highlights the importance of empathetic teachers in creating positive learning environments and addressing students' social and emotional needs. It

also identifies gaps in the existing literature and underscores the need for context specific research in Ethiopia.

# CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

## Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology in this study, which aimed to explore the role of teacher empathy in supporting students facing social challenges in two selected government primary schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, population and sample, data collection instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods. Ethical considerations and delimitation of the study are also discussed. The study used a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a thorough insight into the topic.

## Research Design

The study tried to apply a convergent mixed methods design, where qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and integrated during interpretation. This approach allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity and richness of the findings. Unlike traditional mixed methods studies that may use a wide range of quantitative tools like surveys or experiments, this study relied only the Empathy Scale as the quantitative tool, alongside qualitative methods like interviews, focus group discussions, and empathy maps.

This design combined the detailed, rich insights from qualitative methods with the structured, measurable data from the Empathy Scale, providing a well-rounded understanding of empathy. The use of triangulation allowed for the comparison of

findings from different methods, strengthening the validity and reliability of the results. Additionally, the design offered flexibility, enabling the researcher to adapt methods based on the context and participants' responses, ensuring the research remained responsive to the study's unique dynamics.

## Study Setting

This research was conducted in two government pre-primary, primary, and middle schools: Meserete Ethiopia and Worha Yekatit Pre-Primary, Primary and Middle Schools. These schools are located in Kirkos Sub-City, Addis Ababa, and serve a large number of vulnerable students, including children who migrated from rural areas and face challenges such as exploitation, family separation, child-headed households, and poverty.

Meserete Ethiopia Pre-Primary, Primary and Middle School is located in Kirkos Sub-City Woreda 05, around Sarbet area. Established in 1962 (EC), the school was initially privately owned but was transferred to public ownership in 2004 (EC). According to the school Vice Principal, the school has 807 students (481 female and 326 male) and 91 teachers. Among these students, over 50 face various social challenges such as poverty, exploitation, family separation, loss of parents, economic hardship, and gender-based violence. The Vice Principal indicated that 20 of these students had migrated to Addis Ababa hoping for a better education and suffered exploitation and abuse. Twenty teachers had direct contact with these students.

Worha Yekatit Pre-Primary, Primary and Middle School, previously known as Keftegna 45, is located at Kirkos Sub-City Woreda 04, around Kera area. Established in 1977 (EC) at the community's request, the school was built to address the lack of

elementary education in the area. The name was changed to Worha Yekatit two years later to commemorate the month the government approved its construction in the month of Yekatit. According to the School Director, the school has 881 students (472 female and 409 male) and 86 teachers. Among these students, 90 face different social challenges such as exploitation and abuse, poverty, family separation, loss of parents, economic hardship, and gender-based violence. The School Director reported that 30 of these students were specifically coming from rural areas with the promise of education. Eighteen teachers had direct contact with these students.

## Population and Sampling

This study involved two groups of participants: teachers and students. Twenty teachers (ten from each school) were selected based on their experience working with vulnerable students and their willingness to participate. The teachers represented different grade levels to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. While the total number of teachers was 177 (91 Meserete Ethiopia and 86 Worha Yekatit) the school selected 20 teachers (10 from each schools) directly involved with the selected students for the study to gain an in-depth exploration of their experiences.

The school selected 28 students (14 from each schools) facing social challenges. These students were chosen by the school because they represent the group most in need of empathetic support. These students are those who migrated from rural areas and face challenges such as exploitation and abuse, poverty, family separation, the loss of parents, economic hardship, and gender-based violence.

# Data Collection Instruments

## Qualitative Tool:

The two qualitative tools in this study are semi-structured interview and focus group discussion.

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to explore their understanding of empathy; the strategies they use to support students, and the challenges they encounter. This format allowed for flexibility in probing relevant experiences while maintaining consistency across participants.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** FGDs were conducted with students to examine their perceptions of teachers' empathy and support. Four groups were held, two per school, with approximately seven participants each. Discussions were guided by open-ended prompts and audio-recorded for transcription and analysis.

## Quantitative Tool: Teachers' Empathy Scale

A 10-item Teachers' Empathy Scale was developed for this study to assess self-reported cognitive and affective empathy among primary school teachers. Items were constructed based on established theoretical definitions of empathy (e.g., Kassin et al., 2017; Zhou, 2022) and informed by the study's conceptual framework. The scale included statements such as, "I try to see situations from my students' perspectives" (cognitive empathy) and "I feel concerned when my students are upset" (affective empathy). Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), and the tool was provided in both English and Amharic to ensure linguistic accessibility.

Content validity was supported through expert review by professionals in psychology and education. Their feedback focused on item clarity, appropriateness, theoretical alignment, and cultural appropriateness, leading to minor revisions prior to data collection.

Reliability of the scale was assessed by Cronbach's alpha. At the result the scale found to be reliable.  $\alpha = 0.82$ , for cognitive empathy and  $\alpha = 0.84$  for affective empathy and  $\alpha = 0.88$  for total scale. As Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) state, "In the early stages of research... reliabilities of 0.70 or higher will suffice" (p. 265). These results indicate that the empathy scale met the threshold for acceptable reliability in educational research, further supported by contemporary guidance from Tavakol and Dennick (2011).

Although exploratory factor analysis was not conducted due to the small sample size, construct validity was strengthened through triangulation. Empathy scale scores were interpreted in conjunction with qualitative interview data, enhancing interpretive confidence and alignment between reported and observed empathic behaviors

## Pilot Testing

Pilot testing was conducted at Tibebe Gebeya Pre-Primary Primary and Middle School chosen for its demographic and structural similarity to the primary study sites. Fifteen teachers and twenty students participated. This school was school was not included in the main research sample to avoid bias.

The pilot study served several important functions:

- It confirmed the comprehensibility and clarity of all data collection instruments
- Participants completed the Teachers' Empathy Scale without difficulty, affirming the usability of both the English and Amharic versions.
- The pilot supported face and content validity through participant comprehension and reviewer feedback.
- It provided estimates of completion time and feasibility for both interviews and focus group discussions.

## Data Collection Procedures

Before data collection, permission was obtained from school authorities.

Teachers and students were informed about the study's purpose and their participation was voluntary.

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews were conducted privately and audio-recorded with the consent of participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Focus group discussions were held in a quiet classroom and audio-recorded with the consent of participants.

## Procedures of Data Analysis

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data to explore teacher empathy in a comprehensive manner.

## Qualitative Data

Interview and focus group transcripts were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process began with immersion in the data through repeated readings, followed by initial coding of meaningful units. Codes were then clustered into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined in relation to both the coded extracts and the full data set. Each theme was carefully defined and named to represent key patterns in participants' experiences. Thematic analysis offered a flexible yet rigorous framework for identifying how empathy was understood and expressed by both teachers and students in daily school interactions.

## Quantitative Data

Quantitative data from the teacher empathy scale were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, to summarize overall empathy levels as well as the cognitive and affective sub-scale scores. For example, the average cognitive empathy score ( $M = 4.73$ ) was slightly higher than the affective empathy score ( $M = 4.63$ ).

As this study aimed to explore patterns in teachers' empathy levels rather than make generalizable claims, inferential statistical tests were not conducted. Instead, descriptive analysis was used to highlight emerging tendencies, which were then contextualized through qualitative findings. This approach allowed for the triangulation of data sources, enriching the interpretation of self-reported scores with narrative accounts from teachers and students.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were a key of this research process. Guiding every decision to ensure the safety and rights of all participants. Prior to commencing data collection, formal permission was obtained from school authorities, and informed consent from school administrators, teachers and students. The purpose of the study was explained in a clear and age appropriate manner. They were informed that their participation was voluntary with a clear right to withdraw at any point if they wanted to leave without any consequence. All participants were assured that the information collected would be used solely for the study's purpose, and that data and identities would be kept strictly confidential and securely protected. They were told that the information taken would be only for the study purpose and all the data and identities would be kept securely.

A and carefully considered ethical challenge arose concerning the standard requirement for parental/caregiver consent for child participants. While acknowledging the ethical principle that such consent is imperative, a deliberate decision was made to proceed with school-level permission and direct child consent, without engaging caregivers. This is after extensive consultation and a thorough risk assessment with school authorities, prioritizing the fundamental ethical principle of doing no harm to the child.

School officials provided strong advice that attempting to contact caregivers for research consent in this specific environment carried a high risk of immediate and severe harm to the children. The schools explicitly stated that caregiver notification could result in children being removed from school, experiencing increased abuse, or being forced

into situations (e.g. Street begging, child labor, early marriage) that would profoundly jeopardize their safety and access to education. Furthermore, children themselves expressed their fear regarding caregiver involvement, particularly when discussing sensitive issues. Statements such as, “Do you want us to go to the street?” or please do not contact caregivers over school matters when incomplete homework, vividly underscored their fear of severe repercussions, including being kept home or sent back to where they came from. In this context, the school took the place of a parent role, actively working to protect these vulnerable children.

## Summary

In summary, this mixed-methods approach provided a strong basis for exploring teacher empathy in the selected government pre-primary, primary, and middle schools. Using interviews, focus group discussions, and an empathy scale, the study captured how empathetic teachers were in supporting students with social challenges. This approach offered valuable insights into how empathy could support vulnerable learners and improve educational outcomes.

# CHAPTER FOUR: Findings and Analysis

## Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of empirical data collected through multiple research instruments as outlined in the study's methodology. The findings are organized thematically to provide a coherent narrative that addresses the research objectives. Primary data sources include focus group discussions with vulnerable students, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and quantitative results from the Teacher Empathy Scale. While empathy mapping was initially planned as part of the data collection process, this component could not be implemented due to participants' resistance.

The analysis uses a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative with quantitative measures to present a understanding of teacher empathy and its role in supporting students facing social challenges. The chapter begins with demographic profiles of participants, proceeds to thematic analysis of qualitative data, presents quantitative results, and concludes with the discussion of key findings.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) Thematic Analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (p. 6). Following this systematic approach, thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns in teacher training backgrounds and institutional affiliations. Emerging themes included institutional training gaps, experience clusters, and qualification trends, which were analyzed with

quantitative demographic data. Coding consistency was maintained through iterative peer review. This mixed-method provided contextual depth to the statistical findings.

## Participant Demographics

### Student Participants.

The study involved twenty-eight students (fourteen from each school) identified by school administrations as facing social challenges. The demographics for both schools are found in the table below.

Table 1: Students' Profile of Meserete Ethiopia & Worha Yekatit Schools

NO.	Meserete Ethiopia					Worha Yekatit				
	Birth Place	Relationship With Caregiver	Year In A.A	Grade	Age	Birth Place	Relationship With Caregiver	Year In A.A	Grade	Age
1.	Tigray	Relative	3	5	16	Ilbabur	Aunt	2	6	15
2.	Harar	Aunt	5	8	18	Kersa	Aunt	5	5	14
3.	Guragie	Aunt	9	5	14	Jimma	Aunt	1	8	17
4.	Harar	Aunt	5	7	17	Kembata	Relative	4	5	16
5.	Gondor	Relative	3	5	16	Sebeta	Uncle	7	6	15
6.	Nekemt	Relative	1	6	13	Arsi	Aunt	6	5	16
7.	Tigray	Aunt	4	6	16	Wolega	Uncle	3	5	16
8.	Wolayta	Relative	3	5	15	Metu	Aunt	2	6	16
9.	wolega	Aunt	5	5	16	Metu	Uncle	5	7	18
10.	Arsi	Grandmother,	3	6	17	Tigray	Grandmother	3	7	17
11.	wolayta	Grandfather	1	5	17	Gurage	Uncle	1	8	16
12.	Kembata	Uncle	2	6	17	Kembata	Aunt	2	6	14
13.	Nekemt	Uncle	1	5	14	kembata	Relative	1	5	18
14.	Jimma	Relative	3	5	15	Hawassa	Aunt	6	5	15

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of 28 students, with 14 selected from each school. These participants came from various regions across Ethiopia, including Tigray (3), Kembata (3), Arsi (3), and individual students from Harar, Guragie, Wolayta, Wolega, and Jimma. The remaining students were from other regions such as Ilbabur, Metu, Hawassa, and Gondor, reflecting a wide range of geographic backgrounds and living situations.

Twelve students were living with aunts, six with uncles, seven with other relatives, and three with grandparents. This care-giving arrangement reflects the extended family structures commonly supporting children who migrated from rural areas.

Seventeen students had lived in Addis Ababa for one to three years, nine had stayed for four to six years, and two students had been there for seven to nine years. This variation indicates differing levels of urban adjustment, which may influence classroom behavior and teacher-student interaction.

Fourteen students were in grade 5; eight were in grade 6, and three each in grades 7 and 8. Most students were therefore concentrated in the early primary level.

Nineteen students were between the ages of 13 and 16, six were 17, and three were 18 years old. This age distribution reflects the reality that many vulnerable students have irregular academic trajectories due to delayed school entry or interrupted schooling.

## Teachers Participants

The following tables present demographic and professional characteristics of the selected teacher participants from both Meserete Ethiopia and Worha Yekatit Schools.

*Table 2: Meserete Ethiopia Teachers' Profile*

No.	Teacher	Sex	Place Study	Education Level	Area Of Study	Subject	Year Of Teaching
1.	ME T1	F	Wolega University	Degree	Civics	Civics	9
2.	ME T2	F	Addis Ababa University	Degree	Language	English	15
3.	ME T3	M	Kotebe University of Education	Degree	Math	Math	8
4.	ME T4	F	Kotebe University of Education	Degree	Language	Amharic	7
5.	ME T5	F	Kotebe University of Education	Diploma	Environmental Science	Environmental Science	10
6.	ME T6	F	Kotebe University of Education	Diploma	Special Need Education	Special need	15
7.	ME T7	M	Kotebe University of Education	Diploma	Geography	Social Science	8
8.	ME T8	M	Addis Ababa University	Degree	Information Technology	Information Communication Technology	7
9.	ME T9	M	Addis Ababa University	Diploma	Language	English	6
10.	ME T10	M	Addis Ababa University	Degree	H.P.E	Sport	8

*Table 3: Worha Yekatit Teachers' Profile*

NO	TEACHER	SEX	PLACE STUDY	EDUCATION LEVEL	AREA OF STUDY	SUBJECT	YEAR OF TEACHING
1.	WYK T1	F	Arsi University	Diploma	Business and Economics	Math	4
2.	WYK T2	M	Addis Ababa University	Diploma	Language	Amharic	6
3.	WYK T3	M	Bahirdar University	Diploma	Language	English	8
4.	WYK T4	M	Kotebe University	Degree	Geography	Social Science	6
5.	WYK T5	F	Addis Ababa University	Diploma	Civics	Civics	9
6.	WYK T6	F	Kotebe University of Education	Degree	Special need	Special Needs	4
7.	WYK T7	F	Kotebe University of Education	Degree	Information Technology	Information Communication Technology	5
8.	WYK T8	F	Kotebe University of Education	Diploma	Biology	Environmental Science	7
9.	WYK T9	M	Kotebe University Education	Degree	Physics	Math	7
10.	WYK T10	M	Addis Ababa University	Degree	Sport	H.P.E	6

As it is shown the the above two tables the study involved 20 teacher participants; 10 from Meserete Ethiopia and 10 from Worha Yekatit Schools in Kirkos Sub-City, Addis Ababa. The group consisted of an equal number of male and female teachers (10 each). Eleven participants held bachelor's degrees and nine held diplomas. Most teachers completed their studies at Kotebe University of Education (10), followed by Addis Ababa University (7). The remaining three studied at Arsi, Bahirdar, or Wolega Universities.

In terms of teaching experience, nine teachers had taught for four to six years, ten had seven to nine years of experience, and one teacher had more than ten years in the profession. Their areas of study spanned civics, language, special needs education, ICT, mathematics, and physical education reflecting the academic diversity within Addis Ababa's government school system.

## Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Following the demographic analysis, this section presents qualitative findings from focus group discussions (FGD) with students. The focus group conducted with 24 students from Meserete Ethiopia and Worha Yekatit ages 13-18 in Addis Ababa. Using Braun and Clark's (2013) thematic analysis approach, five key themes are identified in this thematic analysis that are balancing school and responsibilities, challenges in school, perceptions of teacher support, impact of teacher empathy and suggestions for improvement. To describe each theme quotes taken from the Focus Group Discussion.

The data analyzed through six key steps manually. It is carefully read all written transcripts multiple times, create codes by marking important passages, grouping related codes into potential themes, reviewing and refining these themes, clearly defining each themes, then writing up the final results.

### *Theme 1: Balancing School and Responsibilities*

Students from both schools described the challenge of managing school work and home caring. This senario reflects what Lynch (2010) describes as care chains: where children take on adult roles due to socio-economic pressures.

*Table 4: Students Responsibilities*

Code category	Frequency	Representative quote	Participants
Work	23	“ I don’t understand what I learn because I don’t have time to study, I always work”	Both Schools
Home responsibilities	18	“wake up early, prepare breakfast, clean the house/dishes, ...”	Both Schools
Childcare	15	“my relative has no time to care for her baby”	Both Schools

This theme reveals that students’ academic opportunities are severely compromised by household demands placed on them by caregivers. The frequency of work-related codes (23 instances) shows how deeply this burden shapes their educational experience.

Emotional exhaustion, lack of study time, and erratic school attendance result from this unsustainable balance between roles.

## *Theme 2: Challenges in School*

This theme highlights the academic and emotional barriers students face within the school environment. While students are eager to learn, their educational progress is disrupted by tardiness, bullying, and pressure from non supportive family dynamics.

*Table 5: Academic Barriers*

Code category	Frequency	Representative quote	Participants
Attendance	17	“I am often late after dropping the child to school	Both Schools
Bullying	11	“Children laugh at me due to my age:	Both Schools
Family issue	9	“I couldn’t make my uncle happy because of my grades”	Both Schools

Older students placed in lower grades reported being mocked by peers due to age-grade mismatch, increase feelings of shame and isolation. Pressure from caregivers often expressed through comparison or disappointment further affected students’ self-esteem and school performance. These issues make students feel unwanted and create feelings of aloneness.

## *Theme 3: Perceptions of Teachers’ Support*

Students expressed mixed perceptions of teacher responsiveness. While some acknowledged acts of material support, many felt that teachers failed to understand their difficulties influencing their behavior and school performance.

Table 6: Teachers' Responsiveness

Code category	Frequency	Representative quote	Participants
Material Support	7	"Teachers give me pens, exercise books..."	ME S6
Teachers' Understanding	5	"Teachers never understand my problems"	ME S11

Most of the responses are on provision of supplies than emotional support. Moreover, few instances of genuine understanding reveals a gap between what students need and what teachers offered. This theme shows the sincere gestures alone are inadequate when they are not accompanied by deeper empathy and a genuine recognition of students' daily realities.

#### *Theme 4: Impact of Teacher Empathy*

This theme examines how teacher empathy affects students. When teachers demonstrated an honest concern, though small but meaningful gestures, students described feeling acknowledged, emotionally supported, and safe.

As one student shared, *"A teacher bought me bread when I told him I was hungry because I hadn't eaten dinner. I was so happy."* Another recalled, *"There is a teacher who brought me clothes, gave me exercise books and pens, and also supports others with things like sanitary pads."* A third noted, *"When I feel sleepy, my teacher tells me to go to the back of the seats and rest."*

These shows how small acts of kindness can turn things around especially for those children with difficulties at home. Such empathetic incidents helped build trust, reduce anxiety, and create a sense of belonging within the classroom. This theme

underscores the role of teacher empathy in supporting vulnerable learners particularly in the absence of formal support systems.

### *Theme 5: Suggestions for Improvement*

Finally, the fifth theme suggests that students expressed clear desire for greater emotional support from their teachers and emphasized the need for dedicated programs within the school to address their social and psychological challenges. While acknowledging teachers' heavy workloads, participants highlighted the importance of being listened to and understood. As one student explained, *"Teachers can be supportive by listening and understanding my problems and others too."* Another added, *"There is no initiatives from our teachers side; they are so busy to help us."*

These responses indicate that students are not seeking unrealistic solutions, but rather compassionate attention and emotional support. Their suggestions point toward the need for formal interventions such as counseling services, peer support initiatives, or designated safe spaces where students can express concerns. This theme reveals a desire for meaningful teacher-student connection one that extends beyond academics to recognize and respond to students' lived realities.

All the above themes highlight the challenges, support, and empathy in the lives of these students. Their narratives reveal the heavy weight of domestic responsibility, academic struggle, and emotional vulnerability created without support. While some teachers provided moments of compassion, many students felt overlooked or misunderstood. These findings underscore both the importance of empathy and the gaps that limit its reach.

## The Burden of Dual Roles

Students described exhausting daily routines balancing school and domestic responsibilities. A 16 year old female student explained; “I wake up at 4:30AM to prepare food for my aunt’s children, for school, then prepare meal for the house and if I have to take the children to school I do, go to school which I reach late mostly. After school I go directly to the house to do the house chores and at 8:00 in the evening I leave the house to work in the nearest cafe until 3:00. My teachers scold me most of the time for not doing my home works and assignments.” This narrative was consistent across majority of participants, with 19 students reporting chronic tardiness and 12 repeated absenteeism due to household obligations.

## Emotional Impact of Displacement

Many students expressed shame about their academic struggles and living situations. A 17-year-old male student shared: “when teachers call me to solve problems at the board and I cannot, everyone laughs. I wish I could disappear.” Such situations increase instability for older students in lower grades, who faced social stigma from peers.

## Varied Experiences of Teacher Support

While eight students spoke at least one teacher who provided tangible support such as offering exercise books or allowing to take rest; fourteen students reported that most teachers did not seem to understand or care about their situations. A 15 year old said: “Teacher X gives me exercise books and asks if I have eaten. However, teacher Y

says my tiredness is just laziness. This shows that teachers are not always similar in carrying. There are some who are carrying and some are not.

*Table 7: Detail Explanation of Codes*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Contextual Explanation</b>
1.	Daily Activities	Captures the student's daily routine.
2.	Home Responsibilities	Responsibilities Chores and duties at home
3.	Childcare	Taking care of relatives' children
4.	Work	Employment outside of home.
5.	Sleep deprivation	Lack of adequate rest.
6.	Attendance Issues.	Lateness or absenteeism
7.	Fatigue.	Tiredness affecting schoolwork
8.	Distance from school	Challenges due to long travel.
9.	Academic Challenges	Difficulties in learning.
10.	Family pressure.	Stress from family expectations
11.	Family Relationships	Issues within the family.
12.	Financial Issues	Problems related to money.
13.	Bullying	Teasing or harassment by peers.
14.	Social Challenges	Difficulties in social interactions.
15.	Self-esteem issues	Feelings of shame or inadequacy.
16.	Teacher behavior	Actions of teachers affecting students
17.	Teacher Understanding	Assistance from teachers
18.	Material Support	Provision of resources by teachers.

## Semi Structured Interview

This section talks about the findings of semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 teachers, (10 from Meserete Ethiopia (ME) and 10 from Worha Yekatit (WYK) Schools). The interviews aimed to see teachers' experiences supporting students from challenging backgrounds. The discussions focused on (1) the challenges students encounter, (2) the strategies teachers employ to support them, (3) expressions of empathy, and (4) barriers. Emerging themes are presented below.

## Findings and Analysis of Semi-Structured Interview

### *Theme 1: Challenges Students Face*

All teachers described the challenges faced by students from vulnerable backgrounds, citing poverty and unmet basic needs as primary concerns. As ME T4 explained, *“Problems of not eating food, not having proper clothes.”* Such unmet needs hinder concentration and participation in the classroom.

Teachers also highlighted the burden of home responsibilities. ME T1 shared that students often *“sleep in class, come without doing their home works and assignments.”* These responsibilities leave little time or energy for academic tasks. As WYK T3 noted, *“Many of the girls I teach have responsibilities at home, such as caring for younger children or assisting with chores.”* ME T2 added, *“They don’t have study time. They don’t study or do their homework,”* while WYK T2 described how students *“struggle to keep up with the workload and fall behind.”*

In addition, emotional strain was reported across both schools. ME T5 and ME T6 observed that some students are withdrawn and fearful in class. WYK T3 and ME T9 described signs of emotional distress, including anxiety and irritability. These findings suggest that both material hardship and psychological stress limit students’ academic engagement.

### *Theme 2: Teachers Empathy and Support*

Teachers described a range of empathetic strategies, including acknowledging students' burdens (ME T1), listening attentively (WYK T1), and offering comfort and

flexibility. One teacher shared, “*As much as I can, I try to understand students’ burdens, try to help them, get closer to them*” (ME T1). Others mentioned allowing students to rest during class as a form of compassion (WYK T4, ME T1).

However, teachers also acknowledged time and workload constraints that limit their ability to offer sustained emotional support. ME T2 remarked, “*We are always in a hurry with too much work. It’s difficult to stop and listen to students’ issues.*” While the intention to help is present, structural limitations often hinder teachers’ capacity to respond fully.

### *Theme 3: Impact of Teachers Support*

Despite challenges, teachers believe that their support has a positive effect on student transformation. Teachers from both ME and WYK Schools noted that empathetic relationships brings trust and emotional relief for students. “*When you show empathy to the students, they feel happy, accepted, and release their tensions,*” shared one participant. Others reflected that “*when students feel heard and understood, they are more motivated and engaged*” (WYK T, ME Ts).

### *Theme 4: System-Level Needs*

Nearly all teachers emphasized the need for additional training, resources, and structural support to meet students’ needs. Participants called for capacity-building opportunities to enhance their understanding of trauma and vulnerability in the classroom. WYK T8 and WYK T9 advocated for “*a more general approach to education,*” while ME T10 and ME T4 echoed the need for school-wide initiatives that

integrate psycho-social support. ME T5 added that understanding students' life circumstances is essential to teaching effectively.

## Empathy Scale

This study assessed empathy levels among teachers from Meserete Ethiopia (ME) and Worha Yekatit (WYK), all of whom worked closely with students facing social challenges. Teachers completed a 10-item Empathy Scale using a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). The scale was designed to measure two dimensions: cognitive empathy (e.g., *"I try to see situations from my students' perspectives"*) and affective empathy (e.g., *"I feel concerned when my students are upset"*).

Cronbach's alpha indicated strong internal consistency:  $\alpha = .88$  for the overall scale,  $\alpha = .82$  for cognitive empathy, and  $\alpha = .84$  for affective empathy each exceeding the recommended threshold of  $\alpha = .70$  (Nunnally, 1978). Descriptive statistics were calculated to explore variability in scores and are presented in the following tables.

### Descriptive Statistics of Empathy

Descriptive statistics were calculated to explore the overall empathy levels reported by teachers. Table 8 presents the means, medians, and standard deviations of each empathy sub scale by school. Table 9 summarizes the internal consistency of the sub scales across both groups.

Teachers from ME reported slightly higher mean scores across both cognitive and affective dimensions compared to those from WYK. Specifically, ME teachers showed a mean cognitive empathy score of 4.73 (SD = 0.41) and affective empathy of 4.63 (SD = 0.46), while WYK teachers reported 4.62 (SD = 0.48) and 4.50 (SD = 0.52) respectively. Median scores for each dimension were either 5.00 or close to it, indicating that most teachers agreed or strongly agreed with empathy-related items.

The relatively low standard deviations across both groups suggest strong consistency in responses. Range values, falling between 3.5 and 5.0, further support the impression of limited variability among respondents.

*Table 8: Table of Descriptive Statistics*

School	Sub-Scale	Mean	Median	SD	Range
MET(n=10) (Q1,2,4,5,8,10)	Cognitive Empathy	7.73	5.00	0.41	4.17-5.00
	Affective Empathy	4.63	5.00	0.46	4.00-5.00
WYKT(n=10) (Q3.6.7.9)	Cognitive Empathy	4.62	5.00	0.48	3.83-5.00
	Affective Empathy	4.50	4.75	0.52	3.50-5.00

*Table 9: Empathy Scores by Schools*

Subscale	Meserete Ethiopia	Worha Yekatit	Interpretation
Cognitive Empathy	0.85	0.82	High Reliability
Affecti Empathy	0.78	0.76	Good

## Interpretation

The empathy scale findings offer insight into teachers' self-perceptions of emotional responsiveness. Across both schools, empathy scores were consistently high especially in the cognitive domain—suggesting that teachers generally considered

themselves sensitive to students' perspectives. However, the difference between cognitive and affective mean scores (e.g., 4.73 vs. 4.63 for ME) was not tested for statistical significance due to the small sample size. As such, any interpretation of these patterns remains exploratory and should be treated cautiously.

While mean scores were elevated and reliability strong, qualitative findings painted a more complex picture. Many students still described feeling misunderstood or unsupported, suggesting a gap between teachers' self-assessed empathy and students' lived experiences. This reinforces the importance of triangulating self-report data with student narratives to illuminate the real expression and limitations of empathy in under-resourced classrooms.

## CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

Teachers in both schools report strong levels of empathy, with mean scores above 4.5 on the empathy scale. Notably, cognitive empathy is slightly higher than affective empathy, a pattern that reflects teachers' professional emphasis on understanding rather than emotionally engaging with students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). While the empathy scale demonstrated strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ), the small sample size and reliance on self-report measures may have introduced response bias. To mitigate these limitations, the study triangulated quantitative findings with qualitative interview data, which provided deeper insight into how empathy is expressed in practice. Findings are interpreted cautiously, with an awareness of the scale's design and its original sample context.

### Comparative analysis of teachers' and students' Responses

This study analyzes the gap between teachers' self-reported empathy and students' lived experiences across the selected schools. While teachers' interviews and Empathy Scale results showed strong self-perceptions of empathy (mean scores >4.5) with teachers describing supportive practices like allowing exhausted students to rest or adjusting deadlines for the children who has home responsibilities, students' focus group discussions also revealed something different realities. Many students report feeling misunderstood, with examples like "Teachers' say my reasons for being late are not a valid reason for not doing my homework, coming late or being absent" (ME Student) there is also another student who said " They forget my problems and get angry later"(WYK Student). The collected data shows teachers primarily view empathy as

emotional understanding or occasional material support (providing clothes, sanitary pads), whereas students emphasized the need of structural accommodations particularly regarding rigid attendance policies that punish unavoidable absences due to domestic labor

## Female Teachers' Support

A clear pattern emerges showing that students frequently identify female teachers as providing constant support. This is supported by the interview data, which indicated that these teachers often emphasized nurturing methods in their interactions. They tend to create a warm and caring environment, which helps students feel more comfortable and supported and this might be influenced by traditional roles they have been socialized into, where caregiving and nurturing are highly valued. Consequently, this nurturing approach not only benefits students but also fosters a positive learning environment.

## Structural Barriers' to Empathic Practice

Even the most empathetic teachers' efforts are undermined by institutional constraints; for example, students working long hours before coming to school (e.g. "I work until 3:00 a.m. sleep for an hour and 30 minutes') face systematic obstacles no individual teacher could resolve. Schools could have solved the problems but due to lack of counseling services, which elementary schools failed to have, unchanged grading policies, and socioeconomic burdens made these students suffer.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary:

This research aims to investigate the role of teachers' empathy in supporting primary school students coming from rural area who face social challenges in Addis Ababa. It focuses on understanding how teachers demonstrate empathy in the selected schools towards these children. The research tries to see the social challenges these students face, the strategies teachers use to support them, and the how it affects teachers' empathy to students' academic performance.

The research shows that many students who came from rural areas in the selected schools experience hardships, including exploitation, neglect and abuse that affect their education and these challenges lead them to have irregular school attendance, emotional distress, and difficulties in understanding what they are learning.

To tackle these problems teachers play an important role by showing them However, some of the students highlighted that they lack support from the teachers. As it is shown in the teachers' self-report and students interview there is a gap in the teachers' self-report and the students' experience that they get from teachers.

The finding shows that while teachers believe they demonstrating empathy students feel ignored and misunderstood. This highlights the need for a dual approach that focuses on enhancing teachers' empathy and addressing systemic barriers to create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

## Conclusion:

This study concludes that teacher empathy is necessary for primary school students facing social challenges and for creating good classroom environment. Empathetic teachers can influence students' academic and emotional stability, helping them to overcome the difficulties they face. However, the study also emphasizes that teacher empathy alone is not sufficient to address the complex needs of vulnerable students.

Challenges within the educational context, including inadequate resources, and a failure to fully understand students' background may hinder the effectiveness of individual teacher empathy. To create meaningful change, it is crucial to implement holistic interventions that combine teacher training with emotional support after knowing and understanding students. This approach will ensure that teachers are better equipped to support their students and that the educational system provides the necessary to promote students' success.

## Recommendations:

To enhance teacher empathy and improve support for vulnerable students, teachers must first understand the students' situations and receive targeted training programs. These programs should focus on developing teachers' cognitive and affective empathy, enabling them to better understand and respond to students' diverse needs. Additionally, schools should establish professional counseling services to provide specialized support for students facing social and emotional challenges.

In addition to awareness and training, teachers need to learn how to support their students by striving to understand their situations before reacting negatively to lateness, absenteeism, or missing assignments. For those students who face hardships, having empathetic teachers is essential.

Furthermore, effective change requires both teacher development and institutional restructuring. Schools should implement systematic supports for example, by revising attendance policies and address the broader problems that students encounter. True empathy requires a school-wide commitment that goes beyond academic performance to recognize students as whole individuals, acknowledging all of their challenges. By combining compassionate teaching with system-level interventions, vulnerable students can experience the emotional safety and academic opportunities they deserve.

# References

- Aggarwal, J. C. (2008). *Essentials of educational psychology* (2nd ed.). Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd.
- , K., Carstensen, B., & Klusmann, U. (2022). Is empathy the key to effective teaching? A systematic review of its association with teacher–student interactions and student outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34(4), 1177–1216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09649-y>
- Aramudin, E. A., & Susanti, W. (2024). Teacher's strategy in fostering students' empathy through thematic learning approach in elementary school. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 11(1), 123–131.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. SAGE Publications.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Cooper, B. (2011). *Empathy in education: Engagement, values and achievement*. Continuum.

- Gable, S. L., & Reischl, D. M. (2007). The role of empathy in intimate relationships. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16(2), 108–112.
- Ge, R., Li, Q., Chen, F., Kayani, U. N., & Qin, Z. (2021). Cultivating teacher empathy through understanding students' development: A cross-cultural perspective. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 17(4), 44–56.  
<https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2021/v17i430432>
- Hockenbury, D. H., & Hockenbury, S. E. (2008). *Discovering psychology* (4th ed.). Worth Publishers.
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
- Kassin, S., Fein, S., & Markus, H. R. (2017). *Social psychology* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Lynch, J. (2010). Developing emotional competence: New strategies and insights. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 27(1), 31–38.
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *Education and training road map 2018–30*. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
- Ministry of Education. (2024). *Education sector development plan VI (ESDP VI)*. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
- Muijs, D., & Reynolds, D. (2011). *Effective teaching: Evidence and practice* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Smeenk, W., Sturm, J., Terken, J., & Eggen, B. (2019). Empathic robots for future learning environments: The role of teachers. *International Journal of Social Robotics*, *11*(4), 645–661. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12369-019-00544-6>
- Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education*, *2*, 53–55. <https://doi.org/10.5116/ijme.4dfb.8dfd>
- Tunnell, G. (2008). The impact of teacher empathy on student motivation and achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *100*(1), 119–132.
- Zhou, Z. (2022). Empathy in education: A critical review. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *16*(3), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2022.160302>
- Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* Teachers College Press.
- Zhou, M. (2022). Exploring empathy in culturally diverse classrooms. *Journal of Educational Inquiry*, *21*(2), 87–104.

# Appendix 1: Consent Forms

የስምምነት ቅጽ ለመምህራኖች:

- የጥናት ርዕስ: (ማህበራዊ ተግዳሮቶች የሚያጋጥሟቸውን ተማሪዎች በመደገፍ የአስተማሪው ርህራሄ ያለው ሚና) Empathy in the Classroom: Social Psychological Insights into Teachers' Support for Students Facing Social Challenges in Selected Primary Schools in Addis Ababa
  - የጥናቱን አዘጋጅ: ገሊላ ተስፋዬ፣ የማህበራዊ ሳይኮሎጂ ማስተር ተማሪ
  - የጥናቱን ዓላማ:- ይህ ጥናት የሚደረገው በሁለት የመንግስት የመጀመሪያ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤቶች ውስጥ ያሉ መምህራን ማህበራዊ ፈተናዎች (ለምሳሌ የጉልበት ብዝበዛ) የሚያጋጥሟቸውን ተማሪዎች እንዴት እንደሚደግፉ ለማወቅ ነው። የእርስዎ ተሳትፎ ተጋላጭ ለሆኑ ተማሪዎች የማስተማር ልምዶችን ለማሻሻል ይረዳል።
  - ለመሳተፍ ከተስማሙ:- ከ45-60 ደቂቃ ቃለ መጠይቅ ይጠየቃሉ።
  - ሁሉም ቃለ መጠይቆች በድምጽ ይቀዳሉ። ሁሉም የቡድን ውይይቶች በድምጽ ይቀዳሉ።
  - ስምዎን በጥናቱ ውስጥ አይገለጹም። እንደ "መምህር 1" ወይም "መምህር 2" ተብሎ ይገለጻል።
  - ቅጂዎች እና ማስታወሻዎች ደህንነቱ በተጠበቀ ሁኔታ ይቀመጡና እና ከጥናቱ በኋላ ይሰረዛሉ።
  - ለመሳተፍ ወይም ላለመሳተፍ መምረጥ ይችላሉ። ጥናቱን በማንኛውም ጊዜ ማቋረጥ ይችላሉ።
  - ቃለመደቆቹ የሚያተኩሩት በትምህርት ቤት ልምዶች ላይ እንጂ በግል ጉዳት ላይ አይደለም ስለዚህ ምንም ስጋት አይገባዎት ። የእርስዎ ግንዛቤዎች በተመሳሳይ ሁኔታ ውስጥ ሌሎች ተማሪዎች ድጋፍን ለማሻሻል ሊረዳ ይችላል።
- ጥያቄ ካለዎት በሚከተለው አድራሻ ያግኙኝ፣ ያነጋግሩኝ:-  
ገሊላ ተስፋዬ email:-gpeace\_love@yahoo.com Phone +251911609062  
ፈቃድ ለመምህራን:-ይህን ቅጽ አንብቤ አንብቤ በጥናቱ ለመሳተፍ ተስማምቻለሁ።

ስም: \_\_\_\_\_ ፊርማ: \_\_\_\_\_ ቀን:- \_\_\_\_\_

የስምምነት ቅጽ ለትምህርት ቤቱ

የጥናት ርዕስ: ማህበራዊ ተግዳሮቶችን የሚያጋጥሟቸውን ተማሪዎችን በመደገፍ አስተማሪው ርህራሄ ያለው ሚና (Empathy in the Classroom: Social Psychological Insights into Teachers' Support for Students Facing Social Challenges in Selected Primary Schools in Addis Ababa)

የጥናቱን አዘጋጅ: ገሊላ ተስፋዬ፣ የማህበራዊ ሳይኮሎጂ ማስተር ተማሪ

የጥናቱን ዓላማ:-

ይህ ጥናት በሁለት የመንግስት የመጀመሪያ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤቶች ውስጥ ያሉ መምህራን ማህበራዊ ፈተናዎች (ለምሳሌ የጉልበት ብዝበዛ) የሚያጋጥሟቸውን ተማሪዎች እንዴት እንደሚደግፉ ለማወቅ ነው። የእርስዎ ተሳትፎ ተጋላጭ ለሆኑ ተማሪዎች የማስተማር ልምዶችን ለማሻሻል ይረዳል።

ለመሳተፍ ከተፈቀደላቸው:- ከሌሎች ተማሪዎች ጋር ከ60-90 ደቂቃ የቡድን ውይይት ያደርጋሉ።

ሁሉም የቡድን ውይይቶች በድምጽ ይቀዳሉ።

ስም በጥናቱ ውስጥ አይገለፅም። እንደ "ተማሪ ሀ" ወይም "ተማሪ ለ" ይባላሉ። ቅጂዎች እና ማስታወሻዎች ደህንነቱ በተጠበቀ ሁኔታ ይቀመጡ እና ከጥናቱ በኋላ ይሰረዛሉ።

ለመሳተፍ ወይም ላለመሳተፍ መብት አላችሁ። ጥናቱን በማንኛውም ጊዜ ማቋረጥ ይቻላል።

ጥያቄዎቹ የሚያተኩሩት በትምህርት ቤት ልምዶች ላይ እንጂ በግል ጉዳት ላይ አይደለም ።

ገሊላ ተስፋዬ

gpeace\_love@yahoo.com

+251911609062

ለትምህርት ቤቱ :-

የሚከተሉት የ\_\_\_\_\_ ተማሪዎች በቃለመጠይቁ ላይ እንዲሳተፉ ት/ቤቱ ፈቃድ ሰጥቷል።

የት/ቤቱ ስም ዳይሬክተር \_\_\_\_\_ ፊርማ: \_\_\_\_\_ ቀን:- \_\_\_\_\_

ስምምነት ቅጽ ለተማሪዎች (ይነበብላቸው)

የጥናት ርዕስ: (ማህበራዊ ተግዳሮቶችን የሚያጋጥሟቸውን ተማሪዎችን በመደገፍ የአስተማሪው ርህራሄ ያለው ሚና) (Empathy in the Classroom: Social Psychological Insights into Teachers' Support for Students Facing Social Challenges in Selected Primary Schools in Addis Ababa)

የጥናቱን አዘጋጅ: ገሊላ ተስፋዬ፣ የማህበራዊ ሳይኮሎጂ ማስተር ተማሪ  
የጥናቱን ዓላማ:- ይህ ጥናት የሚደረገው በሁለት የመንግስት የመጀመሪያ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤቶች ውስጥ ያሉ መምህራን ማህበራዊ ፈተናዎች (ለምሳሌ የጉልበት ብዝበዛ) የሚያጋጥሟቸውን ተማሪዎች እንዴት እንደሚደግፉ ለማወቅ ነው።

ለመሳተፍ ከተስማሙ:- ከሌሎች ተማሪዎች ጋር ከ60-90 ደቂቃ የቡድን ውይይት ያደርጋሉ።  
ሁሉም የቡድን ውይይቶች በድምጽ ይቀዳሉ። ስምህ/ ስምሽ በጥናቱ ውስጥ አይገለጹም። እንደ “ተማሪ ሀ” ወይም “ተማሪ ለ” ትባላሉ/ትባላሉ። ቅጂዎች እና ማስታወሻዎች ደህንነቱ በተጠበቀ ሁኔታ ይቀመጡ እና ከጥናቱ በኋላ ይሰረዛሉ።

ለመሳተፍ ወይም ላለመሳተፍ መምሪጥ ትችላላችሁ። ጥናቱን በማንኛውም ጊዜ ማረጋገጥ ይቻላል።  
ጥያቄዎቹ የሚያተኩሩት በትምህርት ቤት ልምዶች ላይ እንጂ በግል ጉዳት ላይ አይደለም ስለዚህ ምንም ስጋት አይግባብ/አይግባሽ ። የአንቺ/የአንተ ግንዛቤዎች በተመሳሳይ ሁኔታ ውስጥ ሌሎች ተማሪዎች ድጋፍን ለማሻሻል ይችላል።

ጥያቄ ካለዎህ/ሽ በሚከተለው አድራሻ አግኝቶችን አነጋግሩኝ:  
ገሊላ ተስፋዬ  
gpeace\_love@yahoo.com  
+251911609062

ፈቃድ:- ለተማሪዎች:- ይህን ቅጽ አንብቤ አንብቤ በጥናቱ ለመሳተፍ ተስማምቻለሁ።

ስም: \_\_\_\_\_ ፊርማ: \_\_\_\_\_ ቀን:- \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Questioners

የተተካሪ የቡድን ውይይት ጥያቄዎች ለተማሪዎች

ይህ መጠይቅ የሚያካትተው የተማሪዎችን የትምህርት ቤት ልምዳቸውን የሚያጋጥሟቸውን ተግዳሮቶች፣

በአስቸጋሪ ጊዜ ውስጥ የመምህራን ድጋፍ እና ግንዛቤ፣ በክፍል ውስጥ ከመምህራን የሚያገኟቸው

ርህራሄ ፣ እንዲሻሻል የሚፈልጉት ሀሳብና ስለወደፊት ህልማቸው ነው።

1. እባክሽ/ህን እራስሽ/ህን አስተዋውቁ/ቅ እና ስለ ትምህርት ቤትሽ/ህ የሚያስደስት ሽ/ህን አንድ ነ ገር አካፍሊን/ለን።
2. ከት/ቤትና ስለ ትምህርት በጣም የምትወጁ/የምትወደው ማንድነው? በት/ቤት እና በቤት ውስጥ የዕለትተዕለት እንቅስቃሴሽ/ህን አብራሪ/ አብራሪ
3. በትምህርትሽ/ህ ላይ ያጋጠሙሽ/ህ/አስቸጋሪ ተግዳሮቶች አሉ? ስለ ተግዳሮቶችሽ/ህ ከመምህራኖችሽ/ህ ጋር ለመነጋገር ምችት ይሰማሻል/ይሰማህል? ካልተሰማ ለምን?
4. ትምህርት ቤት ለምን ያህል ጊዜ ቀርተሽ/ህ ታውቁ/ያለሽ/ህ? የመቅረት ምክንያቶች ምንድን ናቸው?
5. በቤት ወይም በት/ቤት ፈታኝ ሁኔታ ሲያጋጥም ከክፍል አስተማሪዎች ድጋፍ ታገኛለሽ/ህ? ከሆነ ምን አይነት?
6. መምህራኖችሽ የሚያጋጥሙሽን/ህን ፈተናዎች ይገነዘባሉ? አዎ ከሆነ፣ በምን መልኩ መረዳታቸውን ያሳያሉ?

7. አስተማሪዎችሽ/ህ ከትምህርት ቤት ውጭ ስላለው የሕይወትሽ/ህ ክፍል ምን እንዲያውቁ ትፈልገዋለሽ/ጋለህ?
8. አንድ አስተማሪ ለአንቺ /አንተ ወይም ለክፍል ልጆች ርኅራኄ ያሳየበትን ጊዜ አለ? ምን አይነት? አንቺ /አንተ ያለሽበት/ያለህበትን ሁኔታ አስተማሪዎች ሲረዱ ምን ይሰማሻል/ ይሰማሁል?
9. እንደ አንቺ/ተ ያሉ ተማሪዎችን በተሻለ ሁኔታ ለመደገፍ አስተማሪዎች ምን ሊያደርጉ ይችላሉ?
10. መጨመር የምትፈልገው/የምትፈልገው ሌላ ነገር አለ?

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

The following semi-structured interview questions are designed to explore teachers' perspectives; on their experiences working with students from challenging backgrounds. These questions focus on understanding the challenges students' face, the role of empathy in teaching, strategies for support, communication with students, the impact of empathy, suggestions for improving educational practices, future aspirations for educational systems, and final thoughts on supporting students. The aim is to gather rich qualitative data that reflects the complexities of teaching in diverse environments.

1. Can you share your experience working with students with challenging experience?
2. What are the main challenges you observe among students ? How do these challenges affect their performance in class?
3. How do you express empathy in your teaching? Can you share an example of a time when you helped a student facing difficulties? What specific strategies do you use?
4. How do you encourage students to communicate their difficulties? What barriers do you perceive that prevent them from sharing their challenges?
5. In your experience, how does showing empathy affect student engagement and learning? Can you provide an example where your support made a difference?
6. What additional resources or training do you think would help teachers' better support students facing social challenges?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the support for students in your classroom?

## **EMPATHY SCALE FOR TEACHERS**

**TITLE OF STUDY:** The Role of Teacher Empathy in Supporting Students Facing Social Challenges

**RESEARCHER:** Gelila Tesfaye, Social Psychology Master's Student

**PURPOSE:** This study explored how teachers in two government primary schools supported students facing social challenges. Participation helped improve teaching practices for vulnerable students.

**Instructions:** Please read each statement carefully and indicate your level of agreement by circling the appropriate number. Use the following scale:

1. *Strongly Disagree* 2. *Disagree* 3. *Neutral* 4. *Agree* 5. *Strongly Agree*

### ***Statements***

1. I try to understand the emotions of my students.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree
2. I adjust my teaching methods to meet the emotional needs of my students.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree
3. I feel concerned when my students are upset or struggling.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree
4. I actively listen to my students when they share their problems.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree
5. I try to see situations from my students' perspectives.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree
6. I provide emotional support to students who are facing social challenges.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree
7. I notice when my students are feeling sad, stressed, or distracted.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree
8. I encourage my students to express their feelings and concerns openly.  
(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

9. I feel happy and proud when my students succeed academically or emotionally. I understand when they come to school without doing their homework, come late, or absent when explain.

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

10. I create a classroom environment where students feel safe and supported.

(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree