

**EXPLORING TEACHER EMPATHY IN EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: PERCEPTION,  
UNDERSTANDING, AND PRACTICE**

Thesis

Submitted to meet the Graduation Requirements of  
Master's Degree MA in Education



Author

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Student ID: 04242110020

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**Popi Rosepti**

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## ABSTRACT

The foundations for learning are built in the early years of life, when children start their first journey of education. During the process, they need other people to be with for helping them to obtain their healthy development. One can do it is teachers whom children are dependent on them at school. Therefore, this study responds to the need by focusing on teachers' perspectives while teaching young children at school. This qualitative study describes the lived experience of nine Indonesian preschool teachers from nine kindergarten schools responding to empathy matters during the teaching process in early childhood education. Informed by Nodding's care relational theory and Cooper's empathy classification in teaching and learning, this study explores the teachers' perception of empathy, their understanding, and their practice in the educational setting. In responding to the first aspect, I addressed the question: "*How do teachers perceive the concept of empathy?*" and the second research question to the second aspect was: "*How do teachers understand empathy in the process of teaching and learning?*" following the third research question: "*How do teachers practice empathy in the educational setting?*". The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was used to explore the teachers experiences in answering the three research questions. Data sources were obtained from interviews and observation and analysed using six stage process of the IPA approach. The stages are sorting to the general sense, extracting or finding significant statements, formulating meaning, clustering themes, and repeating the process and culminating to the last step to describe the phenomenon. The first findings related to teachers' perception of empathy reveal a range of themes pertaining to the concept of empathy. It is centered on teachers' perception, word frequency, and teachers' experience in understanding young children's empathy. The second findings for teachers understanding on empathy in the process of teaching and learning primarily focus on teachers' understanding which is divided into some discussion; empathy in young children, and the role of teacher empathy in education. and the experiences of teacher empathy in teaching. The last finding discusses the teachers' practice of teacher empathy illustrate a range of experiences in dealing with students' traits, the ability to communicate with students and parents, classroom activities to nurture empathy, the constraints and challenges for demonstrating teacher empathy, both from teachers and parents perspectives. This study contributes to policy makers and teacher educators to build a pedagogical framework for early childhood-empathy-based education. It gives an insight into the importance of empathy while developing a learning module for students by involving some empathy aspects in the teaching and learning process. For the upcoming research, the variety of approaches and participants can add richness of data and deeply explore the concept of empathy in education from various settings and different perspectives.

**Keywords:** *Early childhood education, empathy, preschool teachers, teacher empathy.*

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*“The true love comes with empathy.”  
(Popi Rosepti)*

This section discusses four important aspects of the present study, namely research background, research questions, objective of study, and significance of study. It starts with the research background to briefly elaborate my requisite experience in developing the research whilst research questions consists of some questions to be answered in the result of the study. Afterward, it continues with objective of study to emphasize the purpose of the research. The last is the significance of the research to explain how this can benefit education fields and fill the gap in the existing literatures.

### **1.1. Background of Study**

I found an online article about a 5-year-old girl who always told a sad story that happened at school to her mom. Some of her classmates, three boys, mocked her with the word ‘poor’ because they thought her bag and pencil case looked bad. In addition, they often hit her and, in one day, they used a wooden beam to hurt the girl. At first, her mom did not rely on her daughter’s story seriously but she kept telling it every time she came back from school. Therefore, her mom complained the case to her teachers to be further surmounted. Fortunately, the teachers and the parents could be cooperative, so the case ended with a better change. This heart-breaking story happened in a kindergarten school at Kendal, West Java, Indonesia (Mutiara, 2022).

Another story came from one of my experiences while being a preschool teacher in the past few years. In one moment, there was one of my student, a girl, kept silent

during the snack time while other students enjoyed their own snacks. I came closer to her and asked what happened but she showed her gloomy face and answered she had nothing to eat. I tried to calm her down and brought the problem to the class. Surprisingly, some of her friends came to her and offered their own snacks to be shared. Then, the girl was happy because she had already something to eat during her snack time. Her classmates, who compassionately shared own snacks, contributed to her happiness.

To begin with, the above stories hooked my attention to think deeply about how young children's behaviours could be greatly influenced by the intervention from their caregivers. For instance, in the first case, the parents and the teachers worked together to educate the students, who did bullying, to apologize and to behave well. While, in the second one, the students' good behaviour was about teacher's support to ask their students for caring. I found an interesting disposition here that young children grew with the values of emotional and moral education from surrounding to regulate their emotions (Santrock, 2016) and teachers played an important role in this instance (Noddings, 1988; Dewar, 2002; Cooper, 2011).

I also remembered my past experiences during teaching young children for about 7 years that they saw teachers as their role model. One of my students once said to me that she wanted to be a teacher because she saw teachers as good people in life. I suddenly wondered how importance the role of teachers for students and to become good models for them. This could be because students spent much time at school in a day and they would see, react, and behave based on what they saw from the teachers. Therefore, at the time, I was thinking that teachers should come up with characters which could build good relationship with students.

Teachers who are able to develop good relationship would provoke healthy environment for students which is important to shape their positive characters (Haslip et al., 2019). In addition, good relationship between students and teachers also allows students to find a safety place at school and enables them to comfort themselves during the learning process. Consequently, the negative stories such as what happened in the first story could be avoided because students have been familiar with good climate at school and they are hoped to emulate it in their social life (Ukegawa, 1996; Spinrad & Gal, 2017). Therefore, it had provoked me to connect with the idea and found in some literatures that teacher empathy could be one of keys to create the goal (Aldrup et al., 2022; Christenson et al., 2021; Cooper, 2011; Schonert-Reichl, 2013; Swan & Riley, 2012).

Given the importance of teacher empathy in education, it should become a concern for teachers because a classroom probably incorporate a whole range of differences among students and it can provoke various interactions among them (Garret & Greenwalt, 2010; Salmon et al., 2018; McAllister & Irvine, 2022). The differences, here, mean that students come from different cultures, background, and characters which force them to respect and appreciate each other, moreover, in the context of inclusive classroom (Partridge, 2018; Makoelle, 2019). In this instance, teachers' role is critical because they facilitate students' learning to build a healthy social interactions in the classroom, especially involving their emotions (Shen & Zhang, 2012; Kaya, 2016; Demedardi et al., 2020; Lantieri & Nambiar, 2021). If students have no sufficient understanding about it, negative responses can happen between them. Therefore, empathy among teachers is needed because teacher empathy appears as a promising determinant to promote high quality relationship not only between teacher-student but also student-

student interactions (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Bozkurt & Ozden, 2010; Cooper, 2011; Jordan & Schwartz, 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Demir, et al, 2022).

In addition, teacher empathy also plays an important role to create a good atmosphere for learning and positively correlate with students' learning success (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Bozkurt and Ozden, 2010; Barr, 2011; Vorkapic, 2013; Meyers, 2019; Huang, 2020; Rosepti, 2022). Since students' characters are vary and it can provoke various problems during teaching, teachers who show their empathy will be able to react or respond it appropriately. As an impact, it can enable students to feel comfort and safe during the teaching and learning process because teachers understand their feeling and help them to solve their problems.

The concept of empathy itself was risen from seminal work of Carl Rogers (1995) as the prominent figure in exploring it (Cooper, 2011). It was earlier developed because of his engagement to psychotherapy with individuals in distress and found its necessity in a process of constructive personality change. Subsequently the theory was developed by many scholars and has been mentioned as a prominent component to the human life (Hoffman, 1981; McDonald & Messinger, 2011; Peck, 2012). During the time, it was firstly valued as an important discussion in a medical context and pedagogical research in relation with students' training for the health-care profession (Zhou, 2022). This was then developed to another field and one of them was educational research. Some research revealed there was a strong consensus about empathy in the field of education that it was highly effective to promote student learning (Meyers et al., 2019), to enhance student engagement (Cooper, 2013), and teachers' social emotional competence (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Therefore, empathy in education is seemingly relevant to the social interactions between teachers and students along with their relationship (Yilmaz, 2007; Vorkapić & Ružić, 2013; Warren, 2014). It is also seen as an approach to help students and teachers acknowledging and appreciating other people's ideas and values, contributing to the moral development (Klis & Kossewska, 1996; Schertz, 2003; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Numanee et al., 2020). In addition, Cooper (2011) stated that 'empathy among teachers can produce creativity in teaching and learning which has a transformative effect on individuals, both in their skills and self-esteem and supports the appreciation of human qualities as well as cultural differences' (p. 183). Dewar (2002) also reported that teachers with good empathy became one of the prominent aspects to be good teachers because they could make students feel comfort and safe along with their relationship. This also shows that empathy, in more specific teacher empathy, can become a tool to bring positive impacts related to the teaching and learning process and students' development as a whole (Tettegah & Anderson, 2007).

At this point, it corroborates that teacher empathy should be placed as the ultimate foundation of teaching process at schools, especially in early childhood education (Knafo et al., 2009; Ripski, 2011; Peck, 2012; Torres et al., 2016; Paulus et al., 2017; Haslip et al., 2019; Ghosh, 2020). This is for a reason teacher empathy not only creates positive teacher-student relationship, but also become a tool of learning for young children since they learn through imitating other people's behaviours called modelling or imitation (Hoffman, 2015; Santrock, 2016). Next, it also emphasizes a theory of the development of empathy in which young children lies on quasi-egocentric empathy distress. It means they can understand what other people think and feel because their affective empathy more greatly develops in this age but not for cognitive one (Hoffman, 2000; McDonald & Messinger, 2011). Nevertheless, they used empathy as unidimensional construct

because they still cannot differentiate between affective and cognitive empathy within their daily lives (Simon & Nader-Grosbois, 2021). Those reasons delineate that teacher empathy meets its significance for young children to allow them having great exposure on it. As an impact, it will be a sight for them finding the viability of empathy in their social interactions at school and build their perceptions regarding empathy from both sides, simultaneously.

Some empirical studies had explored the topic of teacher empathy in early childhood education with the variety of findings. Some corroborated positive perceptions such as what Peck et al (2015) revealed during the research. They conducted a qualitative study in the United States and found some teachers' practices of empathy brought positive impacts to embrace equity in classroom and engage with meaningful communication. Another study from Hodgkins (2022) who conducted qualitative research in the United Kingdom, appealed a range of definitions of empathy and found evidence of a high levels of empathy and emotion within the practice. An experimental study through Harvard Project Zero's Out of Eden Learn project for two kindergarten classrooms, one in the United States and the other in Greece, asserted that children in both classrooms obtained a deep understanding of themselves and their surroundings, made personal connections and developed empathy (Salmon et al., 2018). The project inculcated teacher empathy to the teachers before implementing to the classroom setting. From those studies, it obviously seemed that teacher empathy takes a prominent role to bring positive changes into educational setting.

However, there was other studies which appealed those positive perceptions in teacher empathy did not really disseminate in another place. It was a study from Robingatin et all (2022) which revealed a finding that most early childhood education teachers, in specific counsellors, could empathize but they did not really implement

empathic communication and effective listening while doing counselling communication with their students. The data was taken from teachers at eight early childhood education institutions located in four cities in the East Kalimantan, Indonesia. Another study from Kim (2017) also appealed one from three early childhood education teachers who became the respondents pretended to be empathic during the learning process. It was conducted in a prestigious kindergarten school in one district in South Korea. Those results delineated a fact that teacher empathy was still lacking in some places although much of empirical research found the positive impacts linking with the development in teaching and learning process (Pech, 2010; Peck, 2012; Peck et al., 2015; Ritchie, 2015; Salmon et al., 2018; Swan & Riley, 2012).

In responding to the fact, I come up with the idea to add more literature in teacher empathy implemented in early childhood education, in specific for Indonesian teachers. This present study also emphasizes the strong framework to what had been done by Robingatin et al (2022), but with different context. They collected data from teachers who focused on counselling area, but I desire to find another result from teachers who regularly teach and meet students in daily classroom interactions. I also focus on finding the commonalities perceptions of teacher empathy among respondents because the way how teachers perceived empathy will simultaneously effect on their understanding and practices into their teaching (Kalliopuska, 1999; Schertz, 2004; Cooper, 2011). Along with this notion, it appeals a chance for further study on this field because much of academic works were related to empathy in children (Lennon et al., 1986; Ukegawa, 1996; Hunter & Bech, 2003; Scrimgeour, 2007; Schonert-Reichl, 2013; Lin & Grisham, 2017; Spinrad & Gal, 2017; Noten, et al., 2018; Yu, 2019; Van der Graaff et al, 2020) and empathy to pre-service teachers (Ripski, 2011; Torres et al., 2016), but a little research focused on teacher empathy of young children (Vorkapic & Ruzic, 2013; Peck,

2012; Kim, 2017; Hodgkins, 2022; Vaquier, 2020), in particular within early childhood education in Indonesia (Robingatin, et al., 2022).

Aligned to the context, this present study also attempts to contribute to a disposition illuminating the importance of teacher empathy in early childhood education. This will explore preschool teachers' lived experiences in perceiving and demonstrating empathy for children in the perception year. There are some previous studies explored the similar topic in various countries such as South Korea (Kim, 2017), The United States (Peck., 2012; Peck et al., 2015), The United Kingdom (Hodgkins, 2022), but none of them was conducted in Indonesia. In addition, the method used in this study will also meet a different way of the exploration because it aims to find commonalities on perceiving teacher empathy, indeed, based on teachers' personal practices, since most of the early works conducted in case study. Therefore, it mainly focuses on how teachers lie the concept of empathy on their great exposure of teaching experiences apparently. This deals with teachers' practice at some kindergartens in Indonesia. Furthermore, the result of this study can contribute to build a pedagogical framework for early childhood-empathy-based education and bring an insight to the importance of teacher empathy to the early childhood practitioners, globally.

The primary direction of this study is to collect data from some early childhood teachers in Indonesia regarding their perceptions and understanding related to the concept of teacher empathy. It also explores how they practice empathic behaviours within their teaching practice in the educational setting. The site is in early childhood education because, according to McDonald and Messinger (2011), children in the perception years meet the significant development of empathy. It closely relates to the increase of empathic concern and cognitive empathy gained in this age. Nevertheless, education can be an alternative to cultivate empathy for children, especially in the perception years, and, as

much early academic works elaborated, teacher empathy seemingly becomes one of route to achieve the goal.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

I formulated three research questions in this study to explore teacher empathy in early childhood education with three aspects; perception, understanding, and practice.

The research questions are:

1. How do teachers perceive the concept of empathy?
2. How do teacher understand of empathy in the process of teaching and learning?
3. How do teachers practice empathy in educational setting?

## **1.3. Objective of Study**

The objective of this study is to delineate an understanding the importance of teacher empathy to support and develop a sense of empathy in young children. In achieving it, there is an exploration of lived experiences from some early childhood teachers in Indonesia. It elaborates their perceptions, understanding, and practices regarding teacher empathy in their teaching practice.

## **1.4. Significance of Study**

This present study mainly focused on how teachers put the concept of empathy on their great exposure of teaching experiences. This dealt with teachers' practices in some early childhood education institutions in Indonesia. Therefore, the result of this study can contribute to build a pedagogical framework for early childhood-empathy-based education based on the local custom of Indonesia. In this instance, the local custom means a condition related to Indonesian context such as curriculum which could be

different among countries. Therefore, this study gives an insight to kindergarten teachers while developing a learning module for students through commencing some empathy aspects in teaching and learning process, such as developing the ability of empathetic responsiveness. In addition, the result of this study also brings an insight to the importance of teacher empathy to early childhood practitioners as a whole.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

This section briefly exposits the literature review used in the present study, ‘exploring teacher empathy in early childhood education: perception, understanding, and practice. The subsection starts with the general concept of empathy with consists of definition, characteristics, and domains. Then, it continues with empathy in early childhood education, followed by teacher empathy and its classroom practices. Those notions review the body of knowledge related to similar discussion from the early works and identify the needs for conducting this present study.

#### **2.1. The Nature of Empathy**

##### **2.1.1 The Definition**

Based on Clabough’s writing (2019), the concept of empathy invented about 150 years ago which was derived from a theory of art appreciation. Linguistically, the word of empathy is from the Greek *empathia*, literally *en*, meaning “in,” and *pathos*, meaning “feeling or passion” (Stevens & Woodruff, 2018). In the beginning, the idea was used to fully appreciate a work of art. It was Robert Vischer, the first philosopher who used in print the German expression *Einfühlun*, meaning ‘feeling into’ as an expression for analysing works of art in 1909. It urged people to project own self into the art and get in touch into its meaning. The artists believed that the art could make a feeling. Therefore, Edward Bradford Titchener, as one of the founding fathers of the psychology field and of the school of structural psychology, translated German expression into the English term which is empathy and applied it to the experience of analysing human behaviour (Azarchi, 2020). Through the historical perspective, it seems that the word of empathy

was derived from a copy of the art world and turned it into a thinking verb, understanding others' feeling using their point of view.

Empathy is a skill that cannot be separated from human life. This is because most of daily life activities involve that skill, which according to Howe (2013), it humanizes people and their relationship. He also explains the absence of empathy will cause the world feels harsh, indifferent, less caring, even brutal. For instance, the existence of empathy becomes the foundation of an emotional to many moral systems and facilitate social interactions (Hoffman, 1998; Scrimgeour, 2007; Knafo, et al., 2009; Eivers et al., 2011; Levine, 2013; Williams et al., 2014; Rizkiyanti, 2017; Waller & Hyde, 2017; Cameron, et all, 2019; Demerdardi et al., 2021; Rosepti, 2022). It strongly correlates to the basis of humanistic values because it responds to human psychological needs manifested in human positive behaviours such as kindness, helping, benevolence, and so on (Denham et al., 2001; Zahavi, et al., 2015; Mohammadi, et al., 2020; Nathania et al., 2020). Therefore, empathy contains humanistic value in which basically remains to everyone's self.

There are many psychologists and philosophers discussing about empathy. They concern on various minds in defining its concept. One thought out by prominent figure in humanistic theory, Rogers (1995), who portrayed "the state of empathy, or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the "as if" condition" (p. 140). Another comes from Bloom (2017) who said that "empathy is the act of coming to experience the world as you think someone else does" (p. 24). Meanwhile, Dereli, E., & Aypay, A. (2012) defined "empathy as an emotional dimension which is generally described as an effective characteristic that facilitates feeling any other person's feelings" (p. 1263). Although certain definitions of

empathy are argued differently, they coincide and complete each other which reflects on a process of mental activity involving the feeling of people's understanding and taking a part to address own self and thought to be in that condition.

According to Keen (2007), empathy is a vicarious and spontaneous feeling provoked by seeing other people's emotional state, through listening another's condition or reading. Meanwhile, Segal (2018) described empathy as something to put ourselves in others' position. He articulated empathy as the proverbial 'walk in another's shoes' expressing an understanding to what another person is thinking or feeling. Both portrayed empathy as an understanding of other's emotions and try to put our feeling into that condition. Sometimes, empathy looks similar with sympathy, compassion, pity, or concern, however, these emotions are not same. They might involve empathy but are different in the practice (Hoffman, 1981; Segal, 2018).

Empathy perceives kindness, respect, compassion, concern, and consideration for others (Azarchi, 2020). This can be nurtured, stanchd, developed, and extended through the imagination (Bloom, 2017). Continued with the notion, empathy can be used to motivate others to do goodness during their social interaction. Furthermore, Goleman (2020), who is one of the contemporary authors and teachers contributed greatly to the understanding of empathy, regards empathy as a tool to build on self-awareness that in detail he said 'the more open we are to our own emotions, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings' (p. 172). Those bring a comprehensive view of empathy that is a value driving people to do goodness and act valuably into others' life.

McLaren (2013) declares that, nowadays, empathy becomes the major topic of multidisciplinary and international interest. It reveals that a notion to ideally perform a power to transform our own lives and to bring positive fundamental social interactions

(Barr, 2011; Krznaric, 2014; McKeown, 2022). Although empathy is more about individual emotion, it consists of a force for good in social interaction, because more empathetic people will be kinder and more caring and more moral. Otherwise, people who lack empathy are psychopaths, and those are the worst people in the world (Bloom, 2017). Based on those statements, it seems that empathy takes an important role in the human lives to inculcate good strong emotions while interacting to others (Dale, 2013; Ghosh Smita, 2020; Christenson et al., 2021).

Therefore, according to preceding notions, empathy can be fully understood as a dependent material into human life, both emotionally and physically (Hoffman, 1998; McDonald & Messinger, 2011). It means that empathy has bounded to the changes of human emotion and physical. In other words, while people can engage in a condition empathically, it means they also fully engage to the physical aspects as well (Kalliopuska, 1992). For instance, empathy encourages people to feel others' condition and it simultaneously provokes them to respond it in accordance with appropriate actions. In short, all forms of empathy invite people to restrain from egoism and promote them to endure high consciousness in the expansion of humanizing others (Levine, 2013; Hendershott, 2014; Colombini, 2015; Zahavi et al., 2015; Haslip, et al., 2019).

McLaren (2013) in her book *The art of empathy* briefly divides empathy into two; affective empathy (viscerally feeling) and cognitive empathy (objectively understanding). In another source, cognitive empathy is also called as 'social cognition' or 'theory of mind' whilst affective empathy as 'emotional empathy' or 'social empathy' (Bloom, 2017; Clabough, 2019). Those aspects are prominent in revealing the development of empathy towards the human life (Borba, 2016; McLaren, 2013; Dale, 2014; Krznaric, 2014; Bloom, 2017; Riess & Neporent, 2018; Segal, 2018; Clabough, 2019; Azarchi, 2020).

### 2.1.2 The Domains

**Cognitive Empathy.** Neuroscientists had discovered the anatomy and chemistry of brain in the existence of empathy in the past years ago (Borba, 2016). It reveals that there is an organ has specific features that allow people to develop empathetic responses, or, in other words, human beings are primed for empathy. McLaren (2013) describes the central development of empathy closely relates to neurological structures called mirror neurons and the hormone oxytocin. Those mirror neurons provoke human to duplicate the emotional or sensory state of another's mind and body, therefore, people can easily feel what is happening to others' condition (Dale, 2014).

Research conducted to this development find the process of both, mirror neurons and hormone oxytocin, is sometimes called parallel circuitry, meaning that the reactions in expressing empathy run parallel to what someone else is experiencing, doing, or feeling (Dale, 2014). It is said that the circuitry act also likes a sort of neural Wi-Fi that monitors what is going on in others and people can assess others' feelings, movements, and intentions instantaneously and unconsciously. Mirror neurons are located in amygdala which is the part of the brain involved with experiencing emotions (Azarchi, 2020). They continue to work following human development since the first stage of life, infancy (Hoffman, 1980).

Clabough (2019) also portrays that brain areas which are responsible for empathy are spread throughout the brain. However, there is no empathy centre due to its development, but the neuronal connections happened in mirror neurons work in many diverse brain areas. As an impact, it generates or prevents someone's empathetic behaviours. Furthermore, Goleman in Dale (2014) mentions that the process of it is highly intense to the active actions rather than the passive ones. It means people might be most

emphatic in the condition of trying to be empathic. This finding tends to show that although empathy is something nature to human life, it needs a conscious mind to mature into empathic beings and actively involves to others' emotions with love and compassion (Ukegawa, 1996; Eivers et al., 2011; Geangu, 2015; Wu et al., 2019; Demedardi et al., 2020).

Cognitive empathy, proceeded in this cognitive aspect, develops naturally in early childhood, starting from age four or five. In this stage, empathy is expressed at the time when children find the emerging of distinction from other children. In the older ages, this typical empathy becomes the ability to appreciate on a basic level that emotions are vary and other people can think and feeling in different ways separated from own self. It is also called 'theory of mind' allowing people to the next step for 'perspective taking' that provokes them to see the world through other people's eyes (Riess & Neporent, 2018).

**Affective Empathy.** Krznaric (2014) defines empathy as an involvement of stepping into someone's shoes, gaining an understanding of their feelings (the affective aspect) and perspectives (the cognitive aspect). The definitions also means that it is an emotion to express own feeling based on other people's condition. In psychological term, the response that people give in showing empathy refers to affective empathy or also called emotional empathy (Riess & Neporent, 2018). The majority of people commonly have this typical empathy, especially for children. It also provokes people to get easily sad while reading a sad story or watching painful scenes (Hoffman, 1981; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992; McHarg, 2018).

This typical empathy develops in the aspect of emotion, which is predominantly processed in affective domains. Ries and Neporent (2018) mentioned evidence that empathy was partially hardwired into brain and splits into three different aspects:

emotional, cognitive, and motivation for an empathetic response. Emotional domain is in the first because it predates the development of cognitive empathy (Clabough, 2019). It is because the thought processes behind it is much simpler. It is also portrayed the ability to express empathy emotionally develops early and rapidly in children. Babies have been primed with empathetic behaviours through crying whilst toddlers will show interest to others' distress through asking, such as what happened. By 2 years old and above, nearly all children will engage to the expression through giving hugs and connecting to the emotions. McLaren (2013) mentions this aspect as a key aspect of building empathy. It is because emotional awareness will accurately identify and work with the emotions, thoughts, and intentions of others.

## **2.2 Empathy in Early Childhood Education**

Hoffman (1981) believed that empathy is something that people were born with. There were several research to support this theory by doing some treatment to new-born babies. An experiment is conducted by giving audio recording of a crying baby to a new-born and it found amazing discoveries that the new-born baby turned to cry as well. According to Borba (2016), it was firstly conducted by Marvin L. Simner on 1971 who portrayed that crying given by the baby was not seemingly to respond the stimulus (a disturbing condition) because, according to his finding, the infants did not cry as much as when exposed to equally loud and intense nonhuman sound. According to other research from Hoffman (1980) and Goleman (2020), the crying baby responded to another crying baby seems to be 'the earliest precursor of empathy'. It illuminated that the roots of empathy can be traced to infancy from the early days of their life.

### **2.2.1 The Development of Empathy**

Hoffman (2000) is a well-known person who developed a theory for the development of empathy based on his research. He briefly described that empathy encompasses in five stages and, over the course of them, children are cognitively mature to understand and respond others' distress appropriately. The stages are global empathy, egocentric empathy, quasi-egocentric empathy distress, veridical empathic distress, and empathy for another's life condition.

The first stage called 'global empathy' started from infancy which means that the infants cannot be able to differentiate themselves to others. However, they have the ability to experience empathic distress through showing their emotions of reactive or contagious crying to respond another baby's crying (Hoffman, 1980, 2000; McDonald & Messinger, 2011). Obviously, the response of 'contagious crying' is not an empathic behaviour but it is more of a reflex because they have not yet acquired the ability to understand the feelings of others (Geangu, 2015; Lin & Grisham, 2017). They can begin to differentiate themselves to others at their first year by seeking comfort when they are around other infants or people who are in distress.

The second stage is called 'egocentric empathy' happened in the second year of life. At now, children can recognize the general understanding of emotions. This shows that their empathy have affectively developed, therefore, they can express it through doing something to comfort other persons. For example, if a child meet another child cried, he/she would soothe the child by giving a toy or food to make a comfort. They have no ability to acknowledge the specific emotions and give the child what he/she needs (Denham, 2001; McDonald & Messinger, 2011; Zahavi et al., 2015; Haslip et al., 2019)

The third stage is called ‘quasi-egocentric empathy distress’ inhibited in the second and third years of life. This instance allows children to have a deeper awareness of their own feelings as well as those of others. It means, they have an ability to empathize with other people’s feeling and become aware of the differences of it. Their language and other skills are also developed which enable them to express empathy verbally (Denham, 2001; Santrock, 2016; Rizkyanti, 2017).

The four stage is called ‘veridical empathic distress’ was developed in late childhood or early adolescence. At this time, children’s cognitive ability have developed which allow them to see themselves as having separate identities from others. Therefore, they have reached cognitive maturation which fosters empathic behaviours (Killen et al., 2006).

The last stage called ‘empathy for another’s life condition’ enables children to become full aware of other’s various emotions. They can also empathize for other people’s experiences based on the situation they have. Furthermore, they can also behave with respect to other groups of people such as the poor, etc.

Connecting the stages into preschool age, it seemingly becomes the time for young children to develop their ability of emotional regulation (Geangu, 20015; Rizkyanti, 2017). They also have an engagement to other people which in this instance emotions take an important role to socially communicate (Lennon et al., 1986). Some studies revealed children whose ability to regulate their emotions show good development in learning and social relationship (Denham et al, 2001). Otherwise, children indicated with low level of it displayed poor performance to behave properly such as physical aggression (Waller & Hyde, 2017; Demedardi et al., 2020; Christenson et al., 2021). Among these,

empathy illuminated that it can be moderating such kinds of positive behaviours during young children development (Van de Graaff et al., 2020).

### **2.2.2 Empathy among Preschoolers**

Much academic works regarding empathy among preschoolers have appealed various interesting results of it. For instance, some of them found that empathy closely relates to prosocial behaviours while connecting to other personal's distress (Lennon et al., 1986; Robinson, 2008; Williams et al., 2014), moral development to their social interaction experiences (Denham, 2001; Lin & Grisham, 2017; Paulus & Leithere, 2017; Rizkyanti, 2017; Yu et al., 2019), social awareness (Kameen, 2012), a decrease of physical aggression in showing their thoughts (Scrimgeour, 2007; Morris et al, 2017; Noten et al., 2019), achieving emotional and academic skill development (Pianta, 1997; Kilic, 2015), and peer relationship (Nathania et al., 2020; Eivers, 2011).

Those previous studies appealed that empathy among preschoolers is one of prominent discussions over the years. Most of them were conducted quantitatively such as research had been done by Rizkyanti (2017) and Nathania et al., (2020) who observed the impact of empathy among young children in Indonesia. The same method also used by Scrimgeour (2007), Morris, et al., (2017), and Noten et al (2019) that accounted for the relationship of empathy and preschoolers' socio-emotional development. They found a reliable data for the numbers of respondents, however, a deeper explanation regarding the kinds of specific information such as the types of physical aggression have not provided yet

Another study from Kameen (2012) resulted an interesting discussion using study review method which empathy brings an impact to children's social awareness. This aligns with Eivers (2011) which revealed empathy had a connection to peer relationship

among young children by doing class experiment using the game, children nominated their best friends. It said that children mostly nominated best friends whose high level of empathy. However, it can be more interesting if the research can also be structured qualitatively to explore more aspects of empathy characteristics using preschoolers' perspectives.

Despite the deficiency of some previous studies, they strongly supports this present study which also explores the similar idea, however, with seemingly different discussion. The existence works would also give an emphasis that the matter appear with adequate significance because young children are in the sensitivity stage to their surroundings. Therefore, they enable this present study to additionally contribute to the literature in accordance to the development of empathy in young children.

### **2.3 Teacher Empathy in Classroom Setting**

Some studies described the role of empathy in education as a tool to achieve the expected developments or the learning objectives (Schertz, 2004; Freshbach & Freshbach, 2009); Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Cooper, 2011; Schonert-Reichl, 2013; Colombini, 2015; Riess & Noporent, 2018; Aldrup et al., 2022; Hodgkins, 2022). Moreover, it has been discussed since long time ago through the early works from the 'predecessors' of humanistic pedagogy (Sterba, 2018). Along the years, the topic has been developed into various fields of education in the early childhood education, such as the altruism experiment (Ukegawa, 1996), study program modification (Peck, 2012; Vorkapic & Ruzic, 2013; Kaya (2016); McGowan et al., 2021), across the cultures (Geangu, 2015; Ritchie, 2015), children's affective contributions (Knafo et al, 2009; Pech, 2010; Paulus & Leitherer, 2017; Waller & Hyde, 2017; Gosh, 2020), counselling

communication (Robingatin et al., 2022), and relationship building (Robert, 2017; Kim, 2017; Huang et al., 2020).

In reviewing the previous works of empathy in early childhood education, I found various notions to be discussed. Ukegawa (1996) did a class experiment in one of Japan kindergarten classrooms using cards to show empathetic behaviours among the students. Children gave a card, that had been written some notes, based on their intended numbers to other children who were objected to natural disasters at the moment. Aldrup et al., (2022) and Hodgkins (2022) appealed similar findings which empathy obviously brought a positive impact to the learning objectives. They used the lense of teacher empathy using empirical research in early childhood classrooms thorough qualitative method, phenomenology study, which deeply explored the topic.

There are also several studies illuminated empathy impacts for study program modification in early childhood education. They mostly focused on exploring the level of teacher empathy among the early childhood teachers. For instance, Peck (2012), correlated it with parents partnership which highlighted that empathy becomes the mediator to build positive parent-teacher relationship and create a good program in supporting it. Meanwhile, Kaya (2016), Vorkapic & Ruzic (2013), and McGowan et al., (2021) quantitatively explored preschool teachers' empathy level and connected to some suggestions for the teacher training programs. Some critics made for them which brought the issue of empathy in early childhood teachers regarding the possibility method to develop the result. They focused on measuring the empathy level among teachers but not for a depth exploration what empathy meant for them. It could be interesting if the study could dig more how teachers, whose resulted low level of empathy, perceived empathy itself and so forth.

Robingatin et al (2022) and Kim (2017) also appealed similar critics regarding the possibility explanation. The result found that empathy practice was really needed in early childhood education but some of respondents did not really show this within their practice. Since both conducted in qualitative case study, it could be a chance to explore more about the reasons for the teachers behaviours, which unfortunately it seemingly unexplained in both of them.

The early works related to empathy in early childhood education mostly displayed that empathy in this instance can be one of key factors in the development of learning process. It obviously supports the idea of this present study to use the research site in the early childhood education and find some strengths based on the literature review to be followed. Despite using the practitioners' side, the present study would come up with the similar directions to what the earlier works had done. In particular, they brought an insight to what the study is supposed to delineate such as the common empathy practices.

### **2.3.1 The Role of Teacher Empathy**

In a simple definition, Meyers et al (2019) mentioned that teacher empathy is empathy experienced by teachers as an integral part of the role of teaching. This concept is prominent because teaching is an activity involved a process of social interactions among students and teachers or students and their friends or, in specific context, to other stakeholders (parents, staff, etc) (Yilmaz, 2007; McKeown, 2022; Robingatin et al, 2019). Therefore, teachers are supposed to possess empathy in teaching to respond their professional matters in positive behaviours (Swan & Riley, 2012; Torres & Moreno, 2016; Jordan & Schwatz, 2018; Makoelle, 2019; Rosepti, 2022), especially for inclusive classrooms which consist of various students' characteristics (Partridge, 2018; Makoelle, 2019).

Teacher empathy, in line with the general meaning of empathy, portrayed a performance to take students' perspective and understanding to students' personal and social situations which are different amongst one to another students (Dewar, 2002; Tettegah & Anderson, 2007). In other words, teachers displayed an emotion of looking into students' feeling to any difficulties they have during the learning process. This should be implemented to any conditions in the context of education, not only in the academic setting (Mishna et al., 2005; Shen & Zhang, 2012; Ritchie, 2015; Salmon et al., 2018). At this point, teacher empathy would encounter teachers to put themselves into students' position and respond the problems appropriately (Kilic, 2015; Peck et al., 2015; Csaszar et al., 2018; McGowan et al., 2021), therefore, it should be inculcated to them since becoming pre-service teachers and be involved in their hidden curriculum (Ripski et al, 2011; Torres & Moreno, 2016).

At preschool age, the role of teachers is important to provide the learning model for children. It relates to Bandura's social learning which young children learn through imitating others' behaviours (Bandura, 1969; Santrock, 2016). In the context of classroom setting, teachers' performances become the centre for children's learning and it directly effects on their development, especially for social-emotional domains (Haslip et al., 2015). Therefore, the existence of empathy towards preschool teachers is needed to enable children having positive views to follow in their behaviours (Pech, 2010; Peck et al., 2015). If teachers could behave empathetically, the chance for developing empathetic children would also probably increase. In this instance, teachers contribute to provide any descriptions of good behaviours through being a model during their teaching (Ukegawa, 1996; Dewar, 2002).

### **2.3.2 The Impacts of Teacher Empathy**

Some previous studies regarding the positive impacts of teacher empathy revealed fascinating discussions. They mainly focus on how it can influence to teacher-student relationship (Cain & Carnellor, 2008; Vaquier, 2020; Aldrup et al., 2022; Hodgkins, 2022), support positive learning environment (Levine, 2013; Schonert-Reichl, 2013; Hendershott, 2014; Peck et al., 2015; Kim, 2017). Others also explored the effects of it into promoting equity classroom (Colombini, 2015; Ritchie, 2015; Salmon, 2018; Makoelle, 2019; Nadelson et al., 2019; Christenson et al., 2021), school culture (Barr, 2011; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; McKeown, 2022), students' social-emotional development (Pech, 2010; Haslip et al., 2019; Gosh Smita; 2020), effective communication (Robingatin, et al, 2022), students' outcome (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), and parent-teacher partnership (Peck, 2012; Hodgkins, 2022).

Those works corroborated that teacher empathy positively effects on education as a whole. Additionally, Christenson et al (2021) and Makoelle (2019) emphasized the importance of teacher empathy as a tool to enable teachers understand their students. In other words, teachers come to 'step into students' shoes' because the educational experiences could be different for every child. What comes interesting in the initial study is about bringing an analogy for empathy itself. It is stated that empathy is like the roots of a might oak tree, which means it has a magnificent strength to strive for having a securely steady growth. It acknowledges the readers that empathy, as a whole, has a powerful impact to further develop a securely positive development and strive against any negative narrations (Lennon et al., 1986; Scrimgeour, 2007). Both studies also explored the importance of teacher empathy to promote equity in early childhood classrooms because they raised a case of inclusive classrooms within their context.

Another study from Roberts (2017) revealed that empathy, trust, and time proved the key to build relationship in addressing some key barriers to early learning success in early childhood. A similar finding was also appealed by Simon and Nader-Grosbois (2021) who found nuanced specific links between cognitive and affective empathy and social adjustment as well as behaviour problems at preschool age. It illuminated that teacher empathy played an important role as a predictor of those kinds of development. Along with the notions, it asserts that research on empathy and early childhood primarily assume positive impacts in teaching, especially related to children development.

Aldrup et al (2022) also illuminated teachers' empathy appears plausible in the quality of teacher-student interactions particularly with emotional support. This is because empathic teachers would know that students' emotions if they might confront with challenging tasks or embarrassed and frustrated during the process of learning. They also enabled to identify students' facial expressions such while students get sad about a bad grade or angry with a particular conditions. Hodgkins (2022) also came up with an initial findings of early childhood practitioners' perceptions of empathy with children and families. The study highlighted the specific emotional load of empathy within the profession and outlines the impact on practitioners of such emotional work. Therefore, through those studies, empathy seems becoming the crucial skill which should be acknowledged and celebrated because it enables teachers to understand children and maintain social relationship with children and families in the educational settings.

Study from McAllister & Irvine (2002) also asserted the similar findings because it examined the role of empathy in teacher-pupil relationships and its relevance to moral modelling. It showed that how teachers perceive their empathic relationships with their students would effect on their students' development, especially in moral behaviours. It

also revealed how the system and the constraints under which they work, subvert teachers' natural empathic concern and brought impacts on the moral model for students

Gosh Smita (2020) conducted study in Denmark education system to look at empathy as key element in fostering social and emotional growth in children. It appeared that empathy could help children to build positive relationship through trust and faith and becomes the main key to encourage tolerance and acceptance of others socially and emotionally. This was also delineated if empathy was taught correctly and at right age, it could reduce school bullying. Similar result from Kilic (2015) who found empathetic preschool teachers were more likely encouraged children to show empathy to others, taught positive emotions, encouraged expressing positive emotions, matched positive emotions, responded physical affection in children of 4 year old more than children in 5 and 6 years old.

The earlier studies supported this present study in giving an insight to conduct research focusing on teacher empathy. Some of them described the strengths of it to find its emergence in education whilst others underlined for its intervention programs. However, those studies enable this present study to embrace a newly direction related to the discussion. In further, it can add the literature related to teacher empathy in a specific matter.

### **2.3.3 Teachers' Perception on Empathy**

This section highlights some previous works in teachers' perceptions related to empathy. There is scarcity of finding the earlier academic works on it but this is important to be inserted here because it becomes the main discussion of the present study and teachers' perception correlated to how teachers bring the concept of empathy into their teaching experiences (Barr, 2011; Kim, 2007), counselling communication (Robingatin

et al., 2022), and their professional performance (Peck, 2015; Nadelson et al., 2019). For instance, how teachers perceive empathy will be reflected on their understanding and practice in teaching.

In more detail, the study from Barr (2011) mentioned teachers' perceptions to empathy is positively correlated to with their perceptions of student-peer relations, school norms, and educational opportunities. Although the study not mainly focused on a whole discussion of teachers' perception, it brought a brief description how teachers perceive empathy affected on their empathic abilities while responding to the students' needs.

Nadelson et al (2019) employed a mixed method study to determine teachers' perceptions and practices associated with teaching and learning caring and curiosity. The study was derived from the authors' belief that teachers play a critical role in helping students to develop. The finding of this study revealed the teachers had positive perceptions of teaching caring and curiosity, which are also part of empathy. The focus of curiosity changed when the teaching concentrated on content rather than the instruction method and the instructional methods used to teach caring shifted with the curricular content. However, another result appealed many teachers still seemed lacking on evidence-based interventions to assist in developing the strong character traits to their students.

Study from Robingatin et all (2022) found recent data from Indonesia to explore the teachers' ability while having counselling communication. It was restricted to the points of attending, empathizing, asking questions, and active listening skills. The finding revealed that all the early childhood educator positively perceived empathy as an important tool in that matter, however, most of them did not really implement empathic communication and effective listening. The case particularly happened while asking

questions to explore children's emotions and thoughts. Inversely, Peck et al (2015) came up with study focusing on how teachers expressed empathy in the context of early childhood education which showed positive perceptions on it. The teachers attempted to express emphatic responses in some ways; embracing equity in classroom, being responsive to the needs of children and family, accepting of and being responsive to a family's culture, and engaging in meaningful communication with families.

The last but not at least, Kim (2017) raised an interesting topic related to teachers' perceptions of empathy in early childhood classroom in South Korea. Based on the findings, the teachers had positive perceptions and defined teacher empathy as the ability of the teacher to feel and understand what students feel. They also expressed their empathic behaviours based on their own understanding and given meaning. However, there was a note of this study that 1 from 3 teachers reported to be pretending in showing the empathetic behaviours. In general, this study illuminated the comprehensive discussions on empathy and teachers' perceptions, particularly in the early childhood classroom, but it would be better if it can be more detail in appealing the discussion of the inverse result, such as regarding the pretended teachers to be empathetic.

Some of the early works in teachers' perception of empathy generally support this present study by showing its significance within the context of teaching and learning. In another side, they also brought an insight to enable the present study meeting the components of it, such as important points or categories to be highlighted while gathering data during the field research. To the extent of the literatures, it also allows the present study to appropriately focus on what actually teachers' perception about, moreover in the context of empathy related to educational praxis.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

Considering the role of teacher empathy and its impact on education, I propose two theories in this study: Nodding's care relational theory, and Cooper's empathy classification in teaching and learning. Both theories are intertwined and will be used interchangeably during the discussion because Cooper's main idea was taken from Nodding's. Therefore, In the beginning, I discuss Nel Nodding's care theory (1995) to serve a philosophical framework of teaching as a caring activity and empathy becomes the predictor for building positive relationship. Then, I apply the framework of empathy classification in teaching and learning from Cooper (2011) whose writing mainly focus on empathy in education. Cooper's theory is used to appeal the key types of empathy that commonly appear on teaching and learning process. Those theories are obviously discussed in this study to give the strong theoretical frameworks in the development of this study.

In addition, I employed the theories as the framework in this study for the reason that both experts (Nodding and Cooper) put their attention on empathy in education. Although Nodding used a concept of 'caring', empathy becomes the foundation of her theory in which in which Cooper also used the concept to develop her own context of empathy in education. Therefore, according to my process of reviewing literatures, I found both are theories that could be appropriately used in this study as the theoretical framework and support the findings.

### **2.4.1 Nodding's Care Relational Theory**

Teaching and caring are interconnected because teaching is an activity that involves caring to other people (Barr, 2011; Spinrad & Gal, 2018; Haslip et al., 2019; Nadelson et al., 2019). In particular, preschool teachers strongly need caring because

young children are in the developmental stage of social, moral, and emotional (Raboteg-Saric, 2001; Santrock, 2016). The framework of caring from Nodding (1995) is employed here because she associated caring to morality with empathy and the emotional aspect and understanding of others, which also become the main discussion of this present study. She also mentioned that caring is mainly responsive and reactive that both component is prominent in teacher empathy to create demands mutuality and relational ethics within educational settings (Noddings, 2013, 2015).

In classroom setting, caring together with empathy enables teachers to respond students' needs and desires based on the other's point of view (Pech, 2010; Swan & Riley, 2012; Handershott, 2014; Peck et al., 2015; Dar, 2016; Hodgkins, 2022). Therefore, Nodding (2013) also mentioned that empathy is the main discussion related to the disposition of caring because caring obviously involves a 'feeling with' others and it describes the relationship with empathy. However, the context of 'feeling with' here is not about a projection onto the other, but rather about reception or engrossment leading to the idea of 'receptivity' (Kim, 2017). Cooper (2011) defined receptivity as a means of being open to someone's feelings and feel with someone to share a feeling or an understanding. In other words, it seems that caring has a similar focus with empathy to preserve others' feeling and seeing it alongside others' view. Connected to the context of teaching, both are needed because with caring teachers can vicariously experience what students' feel.

The discourse of caring cannot be neglected into teaching since teachers meet various kinds of students' characteristics (Salmon et al., 2018; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Vaquier et al., 2020). Teachers probably face many problems in different situations which allow them to react and respond it respectively. Therefore, the role of caring into the disposition of teaching seems to be prominent to build a mutual demanding teacher-child

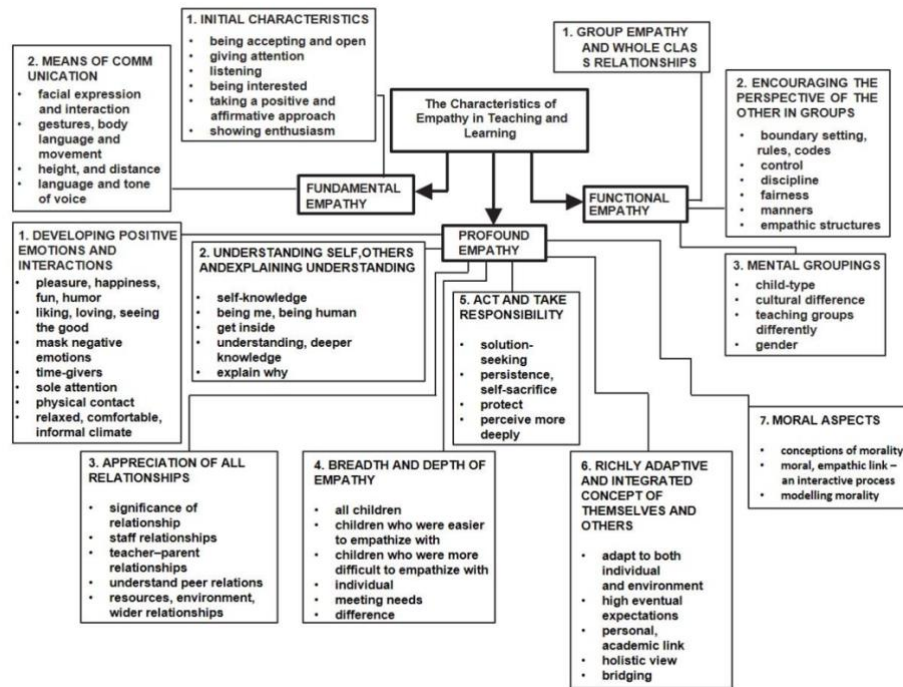
relationship along the process of learning, especially in young children which notably they are still dependent to the caregivers (Santrock, 2016). At this point, it can clearly describe why the theory of caring from Noddings (1995), known as a leading scholar on care in schools (Kim, 2007), employed in the present study.

#### **2.4.2 Cooper's Empathy Classification in Teaching and Learning**

Cooper (2011) primarily discussed a disposition of empathy related to teaching and learning. He developed the framework based on his qualitative research exploring the nature of empathy between teachers and students relationship and how it influences the modelling of morality. Therefore, the focus of his theory ultimately relies on the teachers in the context of social interaction happened in teaching and learning. This present study employed Cooper's empathy classification for the reason its explorations to teachers' perception, understanding, and practices of empathy in the classroom setting and the framework supports to provide the key types of empathy commonly employed in the process of teaching and learning. The following is the figure to visualize the theory of Cooper's empathy classification.

Figure 2.1.

*Cooper's empathy classification (Cooper, 2011, pp. 50, 61, 90)*

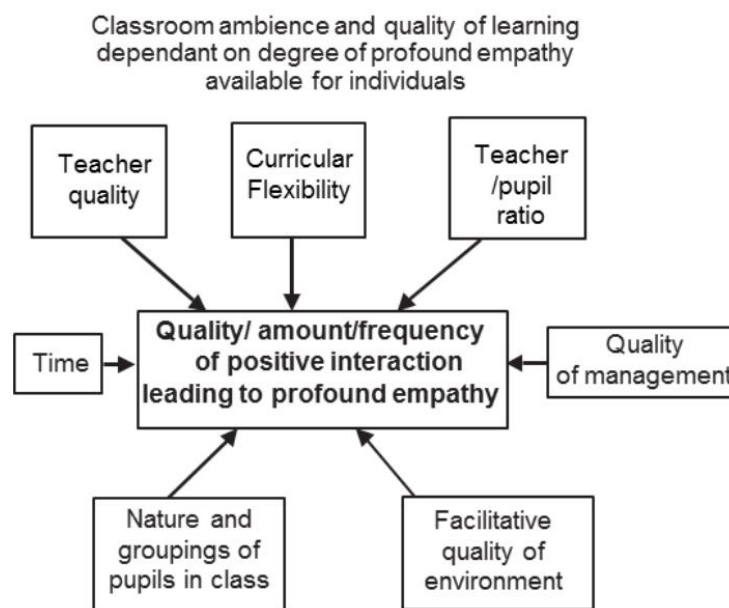


Cooper (2011) classified empathy in teaching and learning into three; fundamental empathy, profound empathy, and functional empathy. He clearly described them in figure 3 together with the characteristics of each discourse. In more detail, fundamental empathy based on the figure provides initial characteristics because it initiates basic characteristics and a means of communication as the tools to build effective communication needed in fostering empathic relationship. While teachers can emulate both, they can achieve higher to the next classification which is profound empathy. At this stage, teachers incorporate empathy, understanding others, to the context of social interactions. In other words, the understanding of teacher empathy is highly needed here. Then, functional empathy displayed a whole condition of the school settings. It is not merely between teacher and students interaction, but other factors such as school rules.

While discussing the third category, functional empathy, Cooper (2011) included the concept of constraints on empathy. He asserted it as factors that influence teachers to prevent them showing empathetic behaviours to students. There is possibility for teachers experiencing the constraints because teaching and learning are a process not only involving teachers and students, but also other things such as time, class size, policy, etc. In further, the constraints can hinder empathetic practices that teachers are supposed to do. As an impact, teachers could probably become less empathic while responding the students' needs (Kim, 2017; Robingatin et al., 2022).

Figure 2.2.

*Constrains on Empathy (Cooper, 2011, p. 129)*



From the figure above, it obviously describes that constraints for teacher empathy come from various factors. However, Cooper (2011) mentioned some of them which mostly appear on teachers' experiences for demonstrating teacher empathy. They are class size, time, curriculum, policy, and management. They all are obviously beyond teachers' control, however, teachers keep to enforce profound empathy in the classroom.

Consequently, the constraints can foster teachers to be less empathic during their teaching and demonstrate ineffective communication without considering students' needs.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The objective of this study is to carry out a small-scale study of teachers within early childhood education to explore their perceptions and understanding of empathy and the practices into educational context. I used a qualitative study because it gained comprehensive data through an in-depth exploration of teachers' understanding and experiences related to teacher empathy in their teaching practices. The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers understand empathy and deal with the practices in the context of early childhood education in Indonesia. The focus of this study is to gain data from early childhood practitioners regarding teachers' perceptions and understanding related to the concept of empathy in teaching. It also explores how teachers practice empathetic behaviours in their classroom setting. This study formulated three primary research questions: (1) How do teachers perceive the concept of empathy?; (2) How do teachers understand empathy in teaching and learning process; (3) How do teachers practice empathy in educational settings?

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

This study is designed using a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach to allow a researcher exploring any problem and obtaining a general understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The design is used to define exploratory research for obtaining an understanding of feelings, values, and perceptions that underlie and influence behaviours (Sarantakos, 2013). For instance, the main inquiry of this study is to find particular meaning in the perceptions, understanding of a concept, and the practice of teacher empathy within the context of early childhood education in Indonesia. Therefore, the chosen approach presents an effective way to be used.

Considering the aim of this study to explore an individual's experience, it uses Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The design is appropriate to present an opportunity to understand the lived experienced of research respondents and how people make sense of a given phenomenon (Alase, 2017). In further, it aims to find commonalities based on the respondents' answers. Throughout the process of research, determining the positionality and reflexivity is essential because it influences the perspective used in this study (Merriam, 2002; Holmes, 2020). It allows me to critically reflect to the choice of topic, how it effects on other choices for data gathering and analysis, and how the interactions with the participants. In addressing the positionality and reflexivity, I put myself as an insider because of the background, roles, and experiences as a preschool teacher whilst reflexivity is employed by writing formal and informal memos related to the topic during the process of data gathering.

In developing this study, I used two different point of view namely from a parent perspective and a former teacher perspective. Using both lenses allows me to see data from different perspectives and place empathize sense within the participants (Peck, 2012). This also effects on the choice of participants that are selected using similar lenses while exploring the idea. As an impact, both lenses enable me to view and interpret participants' answers since we experience in the same field. As a method, both lenses might integrate various perspectives to make further disposition in the topic.

### **3.2 Methods of Data Collection**

In collecting the data, I used two techniques namely semi-structured interview to obtain the primary data and school observation to obtain the secondary data. Both techniques are commonly used in a variety of qualitative study as an instrument of customization for each question based on individuals' situation (Creswell, 2013). The

following table (3.1) elaborates the detail of techniques of data collection for specific research questions.

Table 3.1.

*Types of data collection*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>
1. How do teachers perceive the concept of empathy?	Semi-structured Interview
2. How do teachers understand empathy in the process of teaching and learning?	Semi-structured interview
3. How do teachers practice empathy in educational setting	Semi-structured interview observation

### 3.2.1 Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interview means an interview combined the structured and unstructured types (Sarantakos, 2013). It aims to explore the participants' answers by giving them some planned questions related to the research topic and purpose using the methodological standard, yet, the unplanned ones are also following the rhythm of the participants' answers. The use of the type of interview allowed me to gather data as much as possible. In other words, it enabled me to explore deeper the participants' perceptions and emerge to the relevant topic. The focus of the interview explored how teachers perceive teacher empathy and their understanding within the context of teaching practice. For example; What empathy means to you? How do you perceive it in your teaching? or what do you do while facing children who need an empathetic concern?. In this study, the interview was recorded to keep on the originality of the data and give a chance for me to do member checking (Sarantakos, 2013; Alase, 2017). The detail of the interview sheet is available in the appendix 1.

The interview was conducted in Bahasa within two types; offline (face-to-face interaction) and online (zoom meeting). The choices of them (offline or online interview) and the time were based on the choice from the participants. At first, I contacted them via WhatsApp to ask their permissions and make an appointment to have an interview. The interview was recorded and took about 30 – 55 minutes depending on respondents' answers for about 14 guided questions.

### **3.2.2 School Observation**

During the observation process, I positioned myself as an observer who only observed the school environment and teacher-students interactions without being involved to the process. This was conducted in the same day of participants' interview schedule (one day) and took about 60 to 120 minutes. There was no specific classroom I observed since I moved around the school depending on students' activities (indoor or outdoor). It was also conducted both before and after interviewing the participants. Notes-taking and observation checklist (see appendix 4) were conducted on this occasion.

I focused on the third research question (how do teachers practice empathy in educational setting) while conducting an observation. A checklist instrument was also used to guide me in providing information I needed. Some of them were about the empathetic environment occurred in the school and how teachers showed their empathetic responsiveness to students in natural setting, therefore, I could meet the objective of this study.

### **3.3 Methods of Data Analysis**

After the data collection stage, there are six steps to analyse data following the analysis strategies of the IPA approach (Alase, 2017), namely:

1. Sorting to the general sense
2. Extracting or finding significant statements
3. formulating meaning
4. Clustering themes
5. Repeating the process and culminate to the last step which is to describing the phenomenon or each 'case' being a single participant.

In performing those steps during the data analysis, I firstly did interview transcription from the recording and used quirkos software 2.5.3 to help me finding the results in more detail.

### **3.4 Research Subject, the Place, and the Time of the Research**

#### **3.4.1 Selection of The Participants**

This study involved nine participants from nine different schools. A purposive sampling technique was used in selecting prospective teachers to participate during the data collection since this technique enabled me to find a number of participants who have certain criteria such as their experiences with an interesting phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Alase, 2017). In IPA, the step for selecting the respondents is considered important in order to achieve the reliability and the validity of the data (Alase, 2017). Therefore, the choice of the participants is based on their length of experiences in teaching (minimum 10 years) at early childhood institutions, being parents, and their concern on emotional development for young children. In addition, some of them are actively involved in disseminating empathy at teaching young children and experience in teaching at inclusive classrooms. I used those criteria to ensure that the participants can fulfil the objective of this study. The relationship between the participants and the researcher is vary; some of

them are friends, teachers, and relatives. Here is the demographic information of the participants participated in this study:

Table 3.2.

*Demography of the participants*

Code	Age	Level of Education	Names of School	Location	Position	Teaching Experience (in years)	children	Children's age
Tika	42	Bachelor	TK IA	South Tangerang	Founder / Principal	17	3	F/23, F/20, F/13.
Liya	54	High school	TK KB	Bekasi	Principal	33	3	M/27, M/22, M/17
Nita	42	Master	TK TQ	South Tangerang	Co-founder /teacher	15	1	M/6
Tiwi	32	Master	TK MS	Bandung	Co-founder / teacher	10	3	F/12, M/7, F/4.5
Yati	42	Master	TK HS	Bandung	Founder	11	4	M/17, F/15, M/5, M/3
Sari	42	Bachelor	TK AS	Tangerang	Vice Principal / teacher	16	2	M/15, F/10
Nia	35	Bachelor	TK TL	Tangerang	Teacher	12	1	F/13
Enny	33	Bachelor	TK HB	West Jakarta	Vice principal / teacher	10	2	F/10, F/7
Indah	34	Bachelor	TK IS	East Jakarta	Principal / teacher	11	2	M/7, F/5

### 3.4.2 Selection of The Place

This study took place in nine private Islamic kindergarten schools located in DKI Jakarta and West Java. In more specific, the schools are located in East Jakarta, South Tangerang, Tangerang, Bogor, Bekasi, and Bandung. The schools were recognized as character based schools having a mission to develop students' emotional ability. Since

empathy is a part of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2020), I chose those schools to appropriately align with the objective of the study. In addition, the schools are categorized as inclusive institutions because they allow all characteristics of students, such as special needs students, to study. The inclusivity happened in the schools becomes one of the strength of the school to apply empathetic environment, including empathetic characters among the teachers.

### **3.4.3 The Time of The Research**

Regarding the timeline, the development of this study started from January 2023. It took about four months from February to May following the participants' schedule and one month (May) for the data analysis and one month (June) for the report writing.

### **3.5 The Ethical Issue**

This study utilized the research ethics according to Creswell (2013) by providing a consent form (see appendix 6) for each participant before having an interview and their agreement to be recorded during the process of it. In the preliminary visit, I also explained the topic and the aim of this study as well as gave them a printed document explaining the objective of the study to provide a brief explanation related to the development of it. In addition, during the discussion, all participants names are stated as pseudonym.

### **3.6 Trustworthiness**

In employing the trustworthiness in this study, I followed some procedures outlined by Creswell (2013), namely:

1. A prolonged engagement – the participants are people whom I have known before conducting the study. We have actively communicated before the

development of the study because the participants and I still connected in any events or teaching matters.

2. Data triangulation. I used multiple data collection methods – observations and interviews.
3. Member checking. I attempt to confirm my understanding and my report writing to the participants to keep my research in the right track and avoid misunderstanding from the participants' answers. I also confirmed the findings to my supervisors to correct any misconceptions regarding the participants' answers.
4. Brief description. In elaborating the findings, I provide the context and the time of the interview process.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter aims to exposit the result of research. The elaboration of it is divided into some parts namely an introduction, data gathering information, and findings for three research questions. This is a qualitative study developed from Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore preschool teachers' lived experiences related to empathy. The lived experiences, here, includes their perception, understanding, and practices within their teaching experiences in early childhood education. The lived experience here means personal experience in which the teachers feel and get in touch with it. A total of nine participants participated in this study to share their experiences as preschool teachers. They are from nine different schools located in some cities in DKI Jakarta and West Java; 2 in Jakarta, 2 in South Tangerang, 2 in Tangerang, 2 in Bandung, and 1 in Bekasi.

The data collection mainly took from in-depth interviews through face-to-face interaction and zoom application spending about 30–55 minutes depending on participants' answers. School observations approximately 60-120 minutes was also done but merely for some schools because of limited time and media. During the period, I focus on collecting information by asking the participants what empathy means based on their understanding, how they understand, and how they practice it in the educational setting, both indoor and outdoor activities. The result of this study adds to the existing literature and support the conceptual framework related to the relevant topic.

There are three core research questions employed in this study. They are (1) how do teachers perceive the concept of empathy, (2) how do teachers understand empathy in the process of teaching and learning, and (3) how do teachers practice empathy in

educational setting. Those became the guideline while interviewing the respondents and interpreting their answers. Based on the process, I sorted the responses based on the general idea and identified three primary themes with several subthemes. The first is the teachers' perception of empathy with two subthemes addressing the first research question. The second is the teachers' understanding of empathy with three subthemes answering the second research question. The last theme is *the practice of teacher empathy* with four subthemes elaborating the third research question. To figure it out clearly, I provide a general picture of it following with the description in more detail.

Figure 4.1.

*General description of findings*

Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' perception on the concept of empathy</li> <li>• Words frequency</li> <li>• Teachers' perception on young children's feeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' understanding of empathy in teaching and learning process               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy in young children</li> <li>• The role of teacher empathy in education</li> <li>• Teachers' experience of teacher empathy in teaching</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The practice of teacher empathy               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to deal with students' traits</li> <li>• The ability to communicate with students and parents</li> <li>• Classroom activities for nurturing empathy</li> <li>• The constraints and challenge                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teachers as parents</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### **4.1 Research Finding Question 1: How Do Teachers Perceive The Concept of Empathy?**

The beginning interview section asked how the participants perceive the concept of empathy based on their understanding and their experiences. It aimed to explore participants' perceptions and how they saw the concept of empathy in a general perspective. The data obtained from the interview with participants pertaining to relevant

questions such as what do they know about the concept of empathy and how do they perceive it. During the process of analysis, there were various voices emerged. They perceived empathy based on feeling, attitudes, and behaviours. Most participants perceived empathy as a feeling and attitude but some also perceived it as behaviours. However, generally they believed empathy is a good value which foster people to react positively to other people's feeling.

#### **4.1.1 Teachers' Perception on The Concept of Empathy**

Six out of nine participants (Tika, Yati, Sari, Nia, Enny, Indah) perceived empathy as 'a condition to feel other's people feeling'. They have a belief that empathy is supposed to become our personal value to be engaged to other people's traits through understanding their mind and feeling, both negative or positive. In other words, most of them simply elaborated it with the sentence of 'we try to understand others' feeling or condition using their perspective'. Some of the participants' responses as follows:

*"I see empathy as a part of emotional quotient which allows us to understand people's feeling as if we are in that position" (Tika, Feb/22).*

*"Empathy is a condition in which we can see other people's problem using other's eyes. It means we put our mind and feeling into theirs." (Yati, Mar/14).*

*"I articulate empathy as a feeling to get into other people's feeling or in other words we get into other people's shoes" (Nia, Feb/7).*

Other three participants thought empathy as 'a desire to care about other people's condition' (Liya, Nita, Tiwi). In this instance, they also mentioned the keyword of 'sensitivity' in reading a situation while seeing other people's needs, such as responding to somebody's sadness through giving a hug. In other words, they perceived empathy as a sense which consists of responsiveness, awareness, and encouragement to other

people's condition or feeling. What came interesting in this perception is that they put the concept of empathy not only for human being but also to other living things (animals and plants). This was like a comment from two participants who said "*empathy is about showing our awareness to others' and it applies to all living things not only human being.*" (Nita and Tiwi)

Although there was a different expression among respondents in responding to the first question, they all perceived empathy positively as an attitude which brings a positive influence, especially related to social interactions. In addition, most of them also believed that empathy becomes the most important thing for people to build good relationship and create a harmonize living with other people. Some of them also described that empathy is a God-given and has been internalized since we were born. Therefore, it is a value which everybody has been installed and should be developed since then.

#### **4.1.2 Word Frequency**

While exploring the perceptions of empathy among the participants, there were some common words that they mentioned it during the interview process. They are *feeling*, *caring*, and *love*. Those three words were mostly used by the participants to describe the concept of empathy in the general sense. Since empathy closely relates to social interactions, they believed that those words appropriately described how empathy was. There were five participants (Tika, Yati, Sari, Nia, Enny) expressing empathy as a feeling, three of them (Liya, Nita, Indah) for caring, and one (Tiwi) for love. They had their own point of view in mentioning those words.

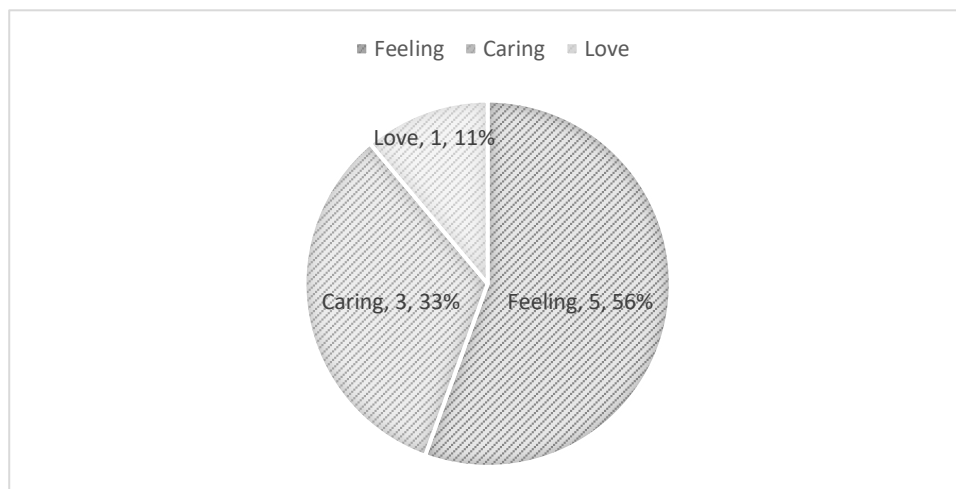
Table 4.1.

*Participants' responses related to word frequency of 'empathy'*

Name	Transcript	Concept
Sari	<i>"When we discuss about empathy, we obviously talk about how to understand others' feeling and position ourself into theirs." (May/1)</i>	Feeling
Enny	<i>"Empathy is more about feeling others' mind and heart. This sense will allow us to understand their condition and react with appropriate manner." (May/4)</i>	Feeling
Liya	<i>"Empathy is a concern to care about people's condition, especially when they are in the severe problem. Showing our empathy means that we show our caring to others." (Feb/29)</i>	Caring
Indah	<i>"Caring is a word that can describe what empathy is. This provokes us to help each other and treat other people nicely." (Mar/1)</i>	Caring
Tiwi	<i>"In my opinion, there are no words describing empathy, but love. It seems that empathy and love are interchangeable and closely relate each other." (May/5)</i>	Love

Figure 4.2.

*The numbers of word frequency*



From the description above, it corroborated that there were differences among participants' answers regarding the frequent words in articulating empathy. Those three words were taken from the participants' answers while explaining the concept of empathy and one interview question which specifically asked about the closest word to describe empathy based on their perception. However, most of them also articulated that empathy is a single name which cannot be resembled to other meaning. In other words, empathy is a stand-alone word in which no other words can be used to describe 'empathy' with its originate meaning.

#### **4.1.3 Teachers' Perception on Understanding Young Children's Feeling**

To explore the first research question deeply, I also asked the participants how they understand young children's feeling while perceiving empathy as preschool teachers. Throughout the process of interview, I found that they did it through observing children's emotions and behaviour. They believed this ability (teachers' capability to understand children's feeling) could be one of teachers' way to perceive empathy itself to their students. For example, when a teacher can understand a child's emotion, she/he can show empathetic responsiveness in appropriate ways. Some of them also asserted that this ability was very important as preschool teachers because young children have a limited ability in communicating their emotions verbally (Santrock, 2016), therefore, teachers need to encompass it by helping them to point it out.

When it comes to the question how to understand what children feel, all of the participants showed the same expression and nearly similar answers. They said that young children were very expressive and it was quite easy to know their emotions from their facial expression or gesture. In addition, to most of them, it became their routine in

morning such as at circle time or welcoming session before beginning the main class to observe their students' feeling and emotions. It was like one of participant's comments:

*"I always walk around every morning to each class and see my students' faces one by one just to check that everybody is fine. It is easy for me just to know their emotions or feeling by looking at their expression, such as the expression of cheerful or gloomy." (Liya, Feb/29).*

Another participant also gave the similar response:

*"to know young children's feeling is very easy since they are really expressive. They will smile while they are happy and they will show a gloomy face while they are sad. We can also see from the gesture such as children having bad mood will keep silent while we ask their condition" (Nia, Feb/14).*

In regard to this instance, there were similar responses among participants that young children can be easily observed while they were happy, worried, or sad. Moreover, since they were the experienced teachers, they said that they had a sense to understand it, with merely a glance of eye. Furthermore, one participant also said that this was required to all teachers to encompass children's feeling and fulfil their 'good' emotion before doing activities on the day. *"As a teacher, we need to ensure that children are safe and feel comfort at school. One of the ways is teachers need to get in touch with children's feeling. This is to show how teacher empathy is." (Yati, Mar/14).*

#### **4.2 Research Finding Question 2: How Do Teachers Understand Empathy in The Process of Teaching and Learning?**

The second research question explored preschool teachers' understanding related to empathy in teaching. The focus of data collection for this second research question was using an interview. During the process, the participants and I discussed about how they built their concern on empathy at teaching young children and in the context of education as a whole. To briefly describe, I divided the elaboration into three parts of discussion; empathy in young children, the role of empathy in education, and teachers' experiences

of empathy in teaching. Those passages were based upon participants' point of view and referred to their personal experiences respectively.

#### **4.2.1 Empathy in Young Children**

When it comes to the topic of empathy in the process of teaching and learning, I firstly explored teachers' understanding in the development of empathy in young children. This aimed to see teachers' perspectives pertaining children's development on empathy. Based on the interview result, all participants showed the similar perspective that young children had been growing with empathetic feeling, moreover, some participants (Liya, Tiwi, Yati) said that young children have a high degree of empathy among others stages of life.

For instance, one participant told her story about her students who could easily cry while watching a sad video and it could indicate she had a heartfelt emotion. Common experiences also came from some participants whose children liked reporting friends while breaking the rules or getting a problem (such as inability to finish meals). They thought those acts of responsiveness were about empathetic behaviours demonstrated by young children. Although they are still in early ages, all participants believed that empathy has been there. This view relates to the theory from Hoffman (1981) who said empathy is something that each human was born with and develops following the stages of life.

Despite of the nurture, an interesting disposition came from one participant (Sari) who also pointed out that empathy for young children was also influenced by nature. Her view came from her experiences by observing her students' empathetic responsiveness. The teacher exemplified by telling a story from her class which was stimulated by empathetic cases or stories. She explained her students showed different responses on it,

some could demonstrate an empathetic expression (such as by showing a sad face) but some were careless. From her experience, she corroborated that young children had different abilities to show their empathy into the surrounding. It is aligned with the theory of empathy development from Hoffman (2000) who mentioned that preschool children are in the third stage of empathy called 'quasi-egocentric empathy distress'. This stage provoked children to have a deeper awareness of their feeling and those of others. Therefore, they have been able to emphasize their feeling with other people's emotions and became aware of it.

Responding to the notion, I remembered one theory from Bandura (1969) with his social cognitive learning that young children learn through their surroundings and Nodding (1995) with caring theory that caring can stimulate others to do the same way. It means young children would behave following how other people behave. A theory from Hoffman (1981) can also emphasize it in which he said that young children learn from modelling or in popular saying it is called as 'children see, children do'. To my knowledge using the frameworks from Bandura, Nodding, and Hoffman can support the participants' belief that empathy is not only developed by nature, but also by nurture.

#### **4.2.2 The Role of Teacher Empathy in Education**

Teaching in early childhood education allows teachers to interact with young children during the process of teaching and learning every day. Teachers' role in this age is also very important since young children still depend on others' guidance during their development (Woolfolk, 2016). Therefore, preschool teachers become those whom children are dependent with at school, thus, children put their concern mostly to their teachers. Responding to this condition, based on personal experiences, all participants stated that teacher empathy is very important and should be a mandatory skill to be

preschool teachers. When I explored further to what extent teacher empathy was important, the participants' answers were vary. However, I concluded into four main aspects, namely *student-teacher relationship*, *role model*, *students' well-being*, and *teaching quality*. Basically, the participants mentioned all of them, but I sorted them based on the priority answers in order.

First, student-teacher relationship became the main aspect for the importance of empathy in education. The teachers mentioned that teaching is an act involving an active interaction among students and teachers and it happens continuously every day (Meyers, et al., 2019). Moreover, preschool students are highly dependent to their teachers so that the presence of teacher empathy is really crucial on that instance (Cooper, 2011). Some of participants (Tika, Tiwi, Yati, Nia) mentioned the focus of preschool teachers is to foster students' comfort by creating good relationship between students and teachers, which can only appear if the teachers have good empathetic responsiveness to their students' needs.

Next, teachers are role models for students (Dewar, 2002). The participants mentioned this aspect as the second role of teacher empathy in teaching profession. In specific at preschool age, teachers became the centre of students' eyes because young children learn through their surrounding (Bandura, 1969; Hoffman, 2000), including their teachers' acts. They will see their teachers' behaviours and follow their teachers' instructions. Therefore, teachers with empathetic behaviours will enable them to perform empathetic responsiveness to students' needs. As an impact, students will also learn the value of empathy and emulate it in their daily life. There were two participants (Tiwi, Sari) who put a strong emphasis on this aspect and made a correlation with students' empathetic experiences at home. She believed the empathetic teachers may stir and

develop students' empathy as well. In addition, it can allow students to have a good role model in case they do not receive such thing at home from their parents.

The aspect mentioned by the participants reminded me to a case in the real life story. I found an online news (Artis, 2020) which was about a boy, who would just turned 5. He felt upset on his parents' behaviour. In more detail, he talked about the reason of his anger for many pranks he constantly got from his parents and his parents' friends. He complained and told his concern on it. He expressed his disappointment and firmly stated that he really disliked on it. His nanny also added a story that he ever questioned why it (the pranks) happened to him. She said, "In the last few nights, while I was preparing his toothbrush, he suddenly came and looked so miserable. He was wondering for the pranks he often got from his close people including parents. He felt so bad for this thing happened in his life". I made a connection between the story and the respondents comments' regarding teachers as a role model. The case obviously confronted with the concept that the role of teacher empathy is prominent to fill the gap.

Third, concerning on students' well-being also became the next aspect for the importance of teacher empathy for teachers. According to the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child stated in Cain and Carnellor (2008), well-being is articulated as a healthy development and effective learning along with children's growth. As human being, students have various emotions and feeling, especially young children who are in the development of regulating their emotions (Santrock, 2016; Rizkyanti, 2017). In this instance, teacher empathy will allow teachers to activate the ability while facing students' problems with appropriate responses to both solve problem and maintain children's emotions. This is because teachers will use children's perspective in that position before responding them. For example, while there was a student spilled the water, the teacher

whose empathetic feeling knew how to react with good emotions, not immediately expressing his/her anger.

Last but not at least was about teaching quality. A classroom incorporates differences among students, such as their characters, ability, family background, and others (Sinagatulin, 2003; Garret & Greenwalt, 2010; Salmon et al., 2018; McAllister & Irvine, 2022), and it probably arises students' problem during learning. For example, each student has different rhythm on understanding a material, there must be fast or slow. In facing this condition, teacher empathy will enable teachers to create various methods to be efficiently applied rather than giving a negative label.

Here are some respondents' answers based on the aspects they gave related to the role of teacher empathy in education:

Table 4.2.

*Participants' responses contributing to the role of teacher empathy in education*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Concept</b>
Nia	<i>“Based on my experience, teacher empathy is very important in teaching to all aspects, but one that helps me a lot is to build good relationship with students and create good learning climate. Those are what teachers need to have in the classroom.” (Feb/14)</i>	Student-teacher relationship
Tiwi	<i>“Empathy is a value which is ‘transferrable’. For teachers, it is prominent because they are students’ role models and has the capacity to ‘transfer’ that sense. I do believe empathetic teachers can obviously born empathetic students, that is why teacher empathy is the prominent value for all teachers to be instilled, especially in early childhood education.” (May/5)</i>	Role Model
Yati	<i>“Young children are in the phase of regulating their emotion which sometimes it can perform their uncontrol acts, tantrum. In facing this, teachers should know what to do and how to make them comfort. Teacher empathy can allow teachers to have</i>	Students’ well being

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*the capacity on solving the students' problems and help them to regulate their emotions appropriately.” (Mar/14)*

Enny	<i>“As a teacher, we have many students in a class having different ability and background. They showed various progress on their development. Therefore, as a teacher we will face it and teacher empathy will allow us to understand and to plan various methods to tackle the students' problems.” (May/4)</i>	Teaching quality
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#### **4.2.3 Teachers' Experiences of Teacher Empathy in Teaching**

This sub theme is the last finding for the second research question. This illustrated how teacher empathy could bring positive impacts in teaching and education as a whole. All respondents were asked their feeling and the impact they had in demonstrating teacher empathy to their students during teaching process. Overall, there were two dispositions concluded from the participants' answers: *having good student-teacher relationship* and *improving students' development*.

The first aspect they experienced is *having good student-teacher relationship*. All participants brought up this thought and enlightened the discussion with some cases taken from their experiences. For example, one participant (Nia) told me a story about her student who denied to join a class and kept staying outside of classroom. The teacher came closer to the student and positively behaved as what she knew about teacher empathy. Then, the teacher finally understood the student's problem and tried to soothe her. In the beginning, the teacher did not force her student to come into the class nor responded the behaviour negatively. She patiently accompanied the student outside the classroom and helped her to release her student's emotion through empathetic listening. At the end, the student expressed her willingness to join the class and it indicated she had already felt a better emotion. From this story, she emphasized that teacher empathy can

allow teachers to make a connection with students and build a good relationship with them. Consequently, it can foster students' trust to share their problems and students' obedience to listen to the teachers' advises. This was like a statement from one participant (Nia). She sounded:

*“Facing young children sometimes need an effort to know their feeling because of their limitation in expressing their emotion verbally. However, we as teachers need to help them in dealing with this matter. One of the ways is through building good relationship with them and get their trust to tell what they actually really want. This will be easier to us to tackle the students' problems.”* (Feb/14)

The next aspect that teachers feel from experiencing teacher empathy was *improving students' development*. The development here means all aspects for young children's needs such as cognitive, affective, and socio-emotional (Santrock, 2016). A story from one participant (Liya) based on her personal experience could elaborate it further. Once she trained her student's self-confidence, she implemented the concept of teacher empathy during the process. It was a five-year-old boy who did not want to play outside especially a sliding because of fear. The teacher compassionately asked him to try it and ensured him a safety condition if he tried. A long process passed and finally the student showed his excitement to play and his eagerness to try other games. She asserted that her experience in that story revealed that teacher empathy could help to improve students' personal development.

Another interesting story also came from one participant (Tika) who told me her experience facing a five-year-old girl. She had a problem with her emotional development, in which her emotion was sometimes uncontrolled and did not want to join the class for three months. Since empathy was one of the school values, the teachers treated her empathetically. At the end, the girl showed her nice behaviours and performed well during the year-end school performance. Her parents were feeling grateful seeing

her improvement and so did the teachers. In more detail, she elaborated her experience as follow:

*“Young children are in the stage of developing their development. It is normal if they have a problem to meet new people or controlling their emotions. Sometimes, they themselves do not know what they want to do. Therefore, we as teachers need to help them in dealing with the matters and teacher empathy is highly crucial to be implemented in this instance.”* (Feb/22)

From the above stories, the participants tried to illuminate that teacher empathy was something crucial and positively brought impacts to education. They not only commented theoretically, but also proved it practically in their experiences as preschool teachers. In addition, their understanding on this passage also allowed them to create inclusive education. It means they allowed students whose limited ability to join their learning process at their schools.

#### **4.3 Research Finding for Question 3: How Do Teachers Practice Empathy in Educational Setting?**

The last finding described in this study is regarding the practices of teacher empathy in education among preschool teachers which is referred to the third research question. The data to answer this question obtained through interview and school observation. The main discussion focuses on personal experiences on how teachers demonstrated empathy to their students within educational setting. It is divided into three subthemes; *dealing with students' traits, the ability to communicate with students and parents, classroom activities to nurture empathy, and the constraints and challenges both from teachers and parents perspectives.*

### 4.3.1 Dealing with Students' Traits

While exploring participants' experiences in practicing empathy, I came up with the idea of dealing with students' traits. The traits here mean all things related to students, either behaviours or emotions. This is because common practices of teacher empathy were apparently implied while students have any problems or matters. For instance, the way how teachers react to the problems and communicate to soothe the students are what needed to describe the practice teacher empathy. One of participants' comments (Tiwi) could describe this condition well. She said "*while students do a mistake, we need to see it using their perspective as a child not ours as an adult. For example, there is a student spilled the water, it is better to ask him/her first what is going on rather than getting mad on it. Students are like us - they are also human.*" (May/5)

Other participants also gave similar responses that teacher empathy is really needed to deal with students' traits. They articulated the needs for all things involved students' lives such as monitoring their development, solving peer conflicts, and so forth. The participants told their experiences with various cases on it and all agreed that teacher empathy was prominent to help us as teachers giving appropriate acts in facing students' negative emotion or behaviours and tackle their matters with positive manners.

The following table consists of some participants' stories telling their experiences in demonstrating teacher empathy to students:

Table 4.3.

*Participants' experiences in dealing with students' traits with empathy*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Transcript</b>
Liya	<i>"I have a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He likes to move everywhere and sometimes disturb others. When he was in uncontrol emotion, I took him to my room</i>

- 
- (principal room) and we spent the day together; studying, playing, and talking. I could not be angry to him since I needed to understand his condition. During the class activities, he could be bored or brought problems from home, therefore I came closer to him and tried to soothe him.” (Feb/29)*
- Nita *“One day, I found one student who was really noisy and distract my focus to teach in front of 25 students. I called him to the front and invited him to be my assistant for teaching. He seemed really enthusiastic and I could teach in more conducive climate. As an impact, he did not make any noises anymore after that.” (May/2)*
- Yati *“Once in the morning, there was a student playing a dangerous play. Her hand was hurt and cried loudly. In this situation, the teacher should show her empathetic feeling by carrying the child and putting her on a safety place. There was no time to judge the child, but to comfort her was the priority. That is what we call as teacher empathy.” (Mar/14)*
- Sari *“I ever faced a student who made a mess of classroom (spilt water and threw books and others). The first act to tackle this was by asking his feelings; trying to explore his main reasons. After he calmed down, we (the teachers) asked him to tidy up the mess as a form of his responsibility.” (May/1)*
- Nia *“I remember when I was a student I could not read a text since my friends could. My teacher never gave me a negative label and patiently taught me after having a class. She also never showed her angriness nor disappointment. Finally, I could read well and learned a lot from her. The experience was really memorable. For me, she is the best teacher I have ever had because she showed me the way how teachers should be. Now I know it is called as empathy.”(Feb/17)*
- 

#### **4.3.2 The Ability to Communicate with Students and Parents**

The next common practices of teacher empathy among participants were conducted on the ability to communicate with both students and parents. All participants believed teachers are also communicators. Nevertheless, besides teaching, their task is also to build good communication and it requires the ability of empathetic feelings and empathetic listening as well as empathetic behaviours. Some experiences related to the disposition are also described, but mostly while communicating to parents such as

evaluating children’s development or reporting an accident happened at school. For students, they mostly included ‘communication matter’ in the part of having good student-teacher relationship.

Table 4.4.

*Participants’ experiences in teacher empathy to have good communication*

Name	Transcript
Tika	<i>“As teachers, we not only have students, but also parents to deal with. I ever experienced facing parents who challenged us to guarantee their child’s improvement. I calmly responded it by explaining the school vision and mission and building good communication during the process of education.” (Feb/22)</i>
Enny	<i>“Building communication is highly crucial as a teacher to help us having good relationship with students and parents. For example, when I had students who needs empathetic concern, I came closer to them and tried to help them releasing own emotions. It needs two important things; empathy and communication. Both are also important while I need to report their children’s development.” (May/4)</i>
Indah	<i>“Once our students get hurt at school, the first thing we do is to call their parents and carefully tell what happened and their children’s condition. At this time, we need the ability to show our empathy and good communication in delivering the message.” (Mar/1)</i>

### 4.3.3 Classroom Activities to Nurture Empathy

The participants realized that empathy is not only needed for teachers, but also for students’ lives. They all believed young children has grown up with empathy and should be developed since then. Nevertheless, they also put an effort to nurture it and integrate it into their teaching. They hoped that the students could emulate it and internalize it into their characters in their social lives.

While discussing this subtheme, in overall, the participants have similar ways in nurturing empathy to their students during the classroom setting. They employed some

techniques namely *storytelling* (from real cases), *read aloud*, and *videos*. *Modelling* is also mentioned to show them the real practice of it in hand. During the process, the teachers would hook students' engagement through having a dialogue, for example asking their feeling when they played a video displaying children who were in hunger and what would they do if they saw it in their surroundings. The dialogue aims to nurture children's empathy and build their understanding on it. Regarding the time, some teachers have a routine to focus on this activity (in the morning before having a class), but some do it incidentally such as having library time or finding a case to be discussed. The following are some responses from the participants related to their methods of nurturing empathy to students. One participant (Indah) sounded:

*“Empathy is an important value in this life, that is why we have a schedule in the morning to focus on it. For example, we show our students a video related to a case and ask students' feeling to respond it. In some moments, we also mention our students' names who are sick on the day and ask other students to be empathetic with this condition.” (Mar/1)*

Another participant (Nia) also shared her experience regarding her technique to cultivate her students' empathy.

*“I usually do read-aloud to my students to build their social awareness which is also included empathy. Not only reading a book, I also build a dialogue to my students to know their responses on it. Telling story with a topic from real-life experiences is also effective because students can take a lesson from their surroundings. For example, when I discussed the topic of bullying, I will ask students to think as if they were in the position of victims; how they feel and what they do.”(Feb/14)*

Besides exploring the techniques, I also explore the effects of it. Mostly, the participants answered that they could see positive changes (some students become more empathetic) through observation, but they also believed what young children needed was merely habituation and modelling (from teachers). One participant also asserted that *“there is continuum process of nurturing empathy not only in a short term and in one*

*technique. Teachers also needed to be patient while doing it and consistently became a good model for them” (Tika, Feb/22).*

Regarding the techniques of modelling, I noticed there were some participants (Tiwi, Yati, Nia) who greatly put an emphasis on it. They considered an issue of parenting style. As teachers, we do not really know how their parents treated them at home and gave them a safety place to grow. Although the participants also regularly communicate with parents and conduct training for them, they still certainly commented that we could not really know the real practice of empathetic behaviours given by their parents. Therefore, they emphasized teachers need to be a good model for showing empathy if there is student who lack of it at home. This discussion was aligned with the previous subtheme of the role of teacher empathy in education.

Furthermore, the participants mostly said that there was no dominant techniques on practice because they did it in various moments and sometimes also unscheduled. They also commented that each technique had own characteristics. For instance, videos were commonly used to visualize the happening cases (natural disaster, etc), storytelling could be best used to show empathetic feeling to friends’ problems (real cases from surrounding), and read aloud was apparently interesting while we want to focus on literacy activities such as in Bahasa course. From this subtheme, we could see that the preschool teachers not only focused on demonstrating their empathetic behaviours, but also put an effort to cultivate the value to their students.

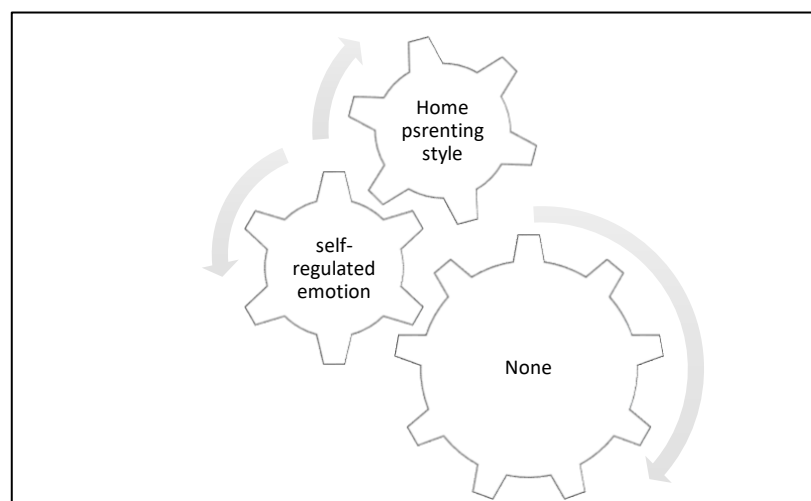
#### **4.3.4 The Constraints and Challenges**

The last subtheme in this chapter explored the participants experiences was regarding their constraints and challenges in practicing teacher empathy to students. The interview question dug up their concern on challenges and constraints that they

commonly faced during their teaching experiences as preschool teachers. The findings revealed three main aspects; *none*, *home parenting style*, and *self-regulated emotion*. Five participants (Tika, Nita, Tiwi, Yati, Nia) mentioned *none*, four of them brought up the issue of *family background* (Liya, Sari, Enny, Indah), and one respondent (Enny) gave two aspects (home parenting style and self-regulated emotion).

Figure 4.3.

*The illustration of respondents' constraints and challenge in practicing teacher empathy*



Based on the last findings illustrated on the above figure (4.3), there were three various answers given by the participants. Five participants (Tika, Nita, Tiwi, Yati, Nia) who answered *none* of constraints and challenges felt that teacher empathy was about oneself; how we dedicated our feeling and thought to understand others, in this case, from teachers to students. When I confirmed Cooper's theory (2011) related to the constraints and challenge on empathy in education, the participants did not consider them neither as the constraints nor the challenges. What Cooper mentioned for them was the things that were not problematic because their focus was more about students' feeling, not others. Therefore, the aspects mentioned by Cooper hindered in this study, but revealed other aspects (home parenting style and self-regulated emotion).

The second finding was *home parenting style*. In a simple elaboration, this aspect means the ways of parents teach their children and habits that students have from home. Some of participants (Liya, Sari, Enny, Indah) brought up this issue with the focus of home education. They found based on their daily observation that the factor highly influenced students' empathy development at school. For example, empathetic behaviours among students in a class were vary; some were good but some were not. It depended on how their parents taught them and put it as a habituation at home. At this point, teachers had a task to accelerate it (empathetic feeling) among the students, meaning they needed to consider the different level of students' empathy while nurturing the value during the learning process. In other words, students whose good empathy would be able to respond teachers' instructions or friends' feeling appropriately, and vice versa.

The last but not at least is about *self-regulated emotion*. Only one participant (Enny) mentioned this as her challenge. She further explained that sometimes she also needed to regulate her emotion first before dealing with students' matters. For example, while there was a student who made a mistake, she could easily get mad if she was having a personal burnout. Therefore, she personally realized that she needed to regulate own emotions or did some relaxation before teaching to avoid the negative emotion for students.

Those three notions were resulted from the participants experiences as preschool teachers. The result might be quite different from Cooper's theory (2011) which revealed there were some common constraints and challenges for teacher empathy, namely class size, time, curriculum, policy, and management, but they did not appear on the participants answers. In further, based on my school observation, I also did not find those

aspects, mentioned by Cooper, during the process of teaching and learning. The teachers handled the students nicely and the teaching process run smoothly as well.

The different result could be because it had different research site in which she conducted research in primary level whilst I focused on kindergarten. Those levels of education notably had different curriculum setting. However, from those findings, it was obvious that practicing teacher empathy had a constraint and challenge which could be different from each other's.

**Teachers as Parents.** In chapter three, I mentioned that one of the participants criteria is being parents. This is to explore further how the teachers put the practice of empathy into their children at home. Besides to exposit some comparison between school and home, it is also what makes this study different from other research in teacher empathy. During the interview, I focused on their experiences in nurturing empathy to their children at home and compare it within the practice at school. I divided this discussion on two aspects; practice and comparison.

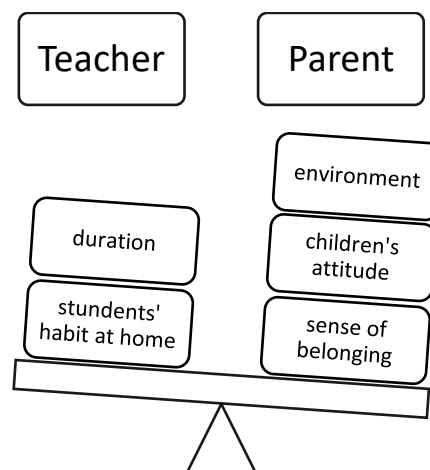
For the practice, all participants mentioned there was no any differences in practicing empathy as teachers at school and as parents at home. They also implemented similar techniques and methods to nurture empathy to their children. What came different between them is merely about the timing and duration. As teachers, they had limited time to do and were restricted to the school rules (graduation as the finish line). Meanwhile, as parents, it was considered as a long journey and took a high responsibility along their children's live.

However, some participants had different answers related to the comparison of nurturing empathy as teachers and parents. On this passage, I dug down with the thought of constraints and challenges. In the end of interview, I also gave the final key question

‘which one is more challenging’. The result revealed three participants (Tika, Liya, Yati) said basically both are same but they felt easier dealing with their own children. This is because students bring their habits from home which sometimes it is beyond teachers’ control (parenting style) and nurturing empathy at school has limited duration (schooling time only). However, the rest answered being parents was more challenging. In other words, the majority answers showed that nurturing empathy to own children at home was quite harder than to students at school.

Figure 4.4.

*The illustration of participants’ answer for the question “which one is more challenging?”*



The above figure (4.4) illustrated that the participants mostly answered nurturing empathy as parents was more challenging than as teachers. There are some main reasons for nurturing empathy as parents more challenging, namely *environment*, *children's attitude*, and *parents' sense of belonging*. Firstly, *environment* highly influences students to do good behaviours because they are in supportive community (having classmates or social interaction) in which they can practice it in hands (Nita, Tiwi, Enny). It is different at home where children only meet their siblings and potentially forced them to show their egoism. Secondly, *children's attitude* is also considered as the challenge because, based

on the participants' experiences, children tend to easily disobey their parents rather than their teachers. This feeling was also felt by some participants (Nita, Sari, Nia, Indah) who mentioned dealing with students was easier than own children at home. Thirdly, being parents is more challenging because of the *sense of belonging* (Tiwi). It means we have no boundaries or timelessness to be with our children, therefore we do not put high expectations to our children in what ages or specific times to them being empathetic people. This is different from being teachers that we have a responsibility to report students' development to their parents and work in line with school rules. Although the answers are varied, and mostly saying nurturing empathy to own children was more challenging, the participants kept continuously doing it to children and still responded that empathy was also one of prominent values prioritized in their home education.

Seeing the variety of answers and its elaboration in this section, it illuminated that the participants not only had positive perception and good understanding on teacher empathy, but also considered it as something to be internalized in practice and nurtured to young children both at school and at home.

#### **4.4 Discussion**

Overall, the findings of this study apparently pointed out the need of teacher empathy in early childhood education. The teachers put a high concern on teacher empathy and asserted it as a mandatory value for teaching, moreover some of them mentioned that it is a necessary skill for teachers (Cain & Carnellor, 2008; Gosh-smita, 2020), especially whom work with young children (Hodgkins, 2021). Based on their experiences, their empathic responsiveness given to students brought magnificent impacts on their relationship and children development during the teaching process (Dewar, 2002; Haslip et al., 2015). This is aligned with the concept of teacher empathy

mentioned by Meyers (2019) and the work from Cooper (2011) who explained the importance of empathy in education. They were also aware of being role models for students' empathic behaviours during their students' development as noticed by Hoffman's theory (2000) and some earlier academic works (McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Kilic, 2015; Dar, 2016). It corroborated that the findings of this study supports the existing literature reviews and the theoretical frameworks illustrating the variety of empathy research in education.

Furthermore, the teachers also made a connection between caring and empathy in teaching as important factors in responding students' needs and matters using students' point of view. Both were mentioned as attitudes which closely relate each other and were familiar in the teaching profession (Ukegawa, 1996; Nadelson, 2009; Robingatin, 2022). Moreover, some of them articulated caring and empathy as reciprocal relationship in which it can occur in interchangeable situation from both teachers and students' feeling. The finding under the theme of the discourse of empathy illustrated how the concept of empathy in teaching aligned to the framework of caring from Nodding (1995). Through her 'Care Relational Theory', she mentioned that caring obviously involved a 'feeling with' others and it described the close relationship with empathy. In teaching, it also occurs through interactions between teachers and students which involve the emotional aspect and understanding of others (Robert, 2017; Kim, 2017; Huang et al., 2020).

Not only between teachers and students, the finding appealed that empathy became the predictor of building good communication to parents. In this instance, the teachers perceived empathy as a whole concept to engage with their clients (parents) through creating connectedness and a successful responsive relationship. They noticed that 'feeling with' was also about to building trust and bonding with parents because they have mutual demanding. In other words, they have partnership in the process of educating

their children at school. This statement was sounded by one of participants (Yati) who emphasized parents mutual relationship in her school. She said, “parents and teachers are partners in educating children. We regularly invite parents to join parenting workshop or parents talks to presenting same visions and mission during the educational process. This becomes our ways to build trust and bonding with parents, so we can successfully work together for our children (Mar/14).”

Throughout this study, it highlighted ‘parents’ as a factor to be involved in education, therefore, it supports some of previous studies (Peck, 2012; Kaya; 2016; Vorkapic & Ruzic, 2013; McGowan et al, 2021) which focused on correlation between empathy among preschool teachers and parents partnership. They mentioned that empathy not only became the mediator to build positive relationship with students but also with parents as well. This is in line with what I have found in this study that the teachers also articulated teacher empathy has a role to build good communication with parents. There was one participant (Indah) emphasized empathy as a tool to address students’ problems at school and communicate them with parents. She said, “while we have to tell children’s problems to parents, the first thing to do is trying to put ourselves as if we are in parents’ position. It helps us to figure out the problems using sensible words (Mar/1).”

However, there was one aspect I found it different from Cooper’s research regarding constraints on empathy (2011). The factors she mentioned (teacher quality, curricular flexibility, teacher/pupil ratio, quality of management, facilitative quality of environment. nature and groupings of pupils in class, and time) appeared none in this study, but revealed some unexpected outcomes such as family background (the ways of parents teach empathy at home) or teachers’ emotional regulation. Interestingly, while I brought them up (Cooper’s theory regarding constraints on empathy) to the discussion

during the interview, the teachers responded that they did not rely on those factors and considered them neither as constraints nor challenges. The discrepancy between these two results could be influenced by the different setting where Cooper focused on elementary and middle school teachers during her research. Referring to human developmental theory which unravel each stage of life, the characteristic between preschoolers and school age differ considerably in every aspects of development (physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional) (Santrock, 2016). Therefore, there were some aspects from Cooper's theory hindered in this study.

Responding to the unexpected outcome, I explored it further because for me it sounded interesting. I was wondering the reasons for not considering Cooper's constraints on empathy as the problem or challenge in nurturing empathy to young children. They asserted their focus in teaching, both at school and home, was about children's well-being and their emotional happiness. Therefore, their empathetic ability seemed interconnected with their strong personal value and character in their life. This is like what one participant (Nia) sounded "as long as I teach young children, I could be finding a constraint on nurturing empathy for different thought of teaching idealism with parents, but I do not consider it as a problem because my focus is about supporting children's healthy development not parents' (Feb/14)."

From the exploration of this finding, the aspect of their teaching experiences which can be categorized as experienced teachers could be the reason for the difference from Cooper's theory. It also influences their perception on it and how they deal with this matter This supports a previous study from Huang et al (2020) who explored the role of teaching experience in preschool teachers and its relationship with empathy and their mental health. The study revealed that teaching experience influenced the level of teacher empathy and teachers' professionalism while maintaining students' emotional

development. Another discussion exposts to the first and the third finding of this study. It is apparently aligned with the theoretical framework related to the classification of empathy in teaching and learning discussed by Cooper (2011). She asserted there were three types of it; fundamental empathy, profound empathy, and functional empathy. In the initial characteristic, the teachers built strong relationship with students by treating them through demonstrating their empathetic responsiveness displayed during individual conversation. They included children's mind reading in this situation to share feeling and develop personal perspectives to foster teachers' empathetic behaviours.

While teachers successfully emulated fundamental empathy, they perceived another characteristic which included a whole condition of the school settings into their practice. In this instance, they attempted to build deeper understanding to children's matters and to nurture children's empathetic feeling, but also utilized their authorities as teachers to balance between giving empathy and engaging to children's development in classroom setting. At the final stage, teachers incorporated functional empathy in which they perceived empathy as a crucial concern and should be internalized as teachers' characters (Christenson et al, 2021; Makoele, 2019) because they are their students' role model (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

In regard with parental experiences, which is also described as the last discussion of this study, the teachers preserved the significance of empathy at home education as well as at school. Although the practice appealed some constraints and challenges, they reflected empathy as a crucial role in building positive relationship and communication towards parents-children interaction. It addresses the same value with the needs of teacher empathy they conceived during their teaching experiences. It also encouraged them to embrace empathy as the integrated nature of nurturing process for their children. It briefly associated to Hoffman (2000) whose works elaborated the development of empathy for

children and the role of caregivers during the process and some early works which also highlighted this aspects (Gosh Kilic, 2015; Smita, 2020; Hodgkins, 2022).

To sum this chapter up, the findings illuminated teachers' perspectives in viewing empathy as an important factor for teachers in teaching young children (Nader-Grosbois, 2021; Hodgkins, 2022), particularly related with emotional support (Kilic, 2015; Gosh Smita, 2020; Aldrup, 2022). It was also considered as the main predictor to foster positive relationship and personal development within teacher-students interaction (McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Cain & Carnellor, 2008; Vaquier, 2020) as well as teacher-parents communication (Peck, 2012; Hodgkins, 2022). Furthermore, the teachers mostly asserted that empathy should become the personal value for all teachers while doing their professionalism in education. This is aligned with the existing literature review and theoretical frameworks in this study which greatly discussed empathy in education from the various setting.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the conclusion, implications, and suggestions for further studies following the limitations of the present study. The conclusion consists of elaboration of the study's findings and discussion, while the implication expounds the contribution that could be given from this study. In addition, suggestions reflect on the substances to be improved from the limitations of the present study for further research.

#### 5.1. Conclusion

Most research of empathy in education focuses on providing responses to elementary to higher levels of education. There is little research on empathy in early childhood education, reflecting its common understanding and practices for teachers in Indonesia. The aim of this study is to describe teachers' lived experiences within the concept of empathy in teaching young children among Indonesian preschool teachers. This study explored teachers' perception, understanding, and practice related to teacher empathy demonstrated to young students at school as well as children at home. The descriptions of the findings corroborated the variety of ways in which teachers perceived empathy and displayed it within the educational setting, including with the context as parents. This study elaborated the discussion through providing a narrative description of the meaning of empathy among teachers, the analysis of teachers' responses to the discourse of empathy in education within the context of early childhood showing their understanding, and the analysis of their practices to empathy displayed during their teaching, including the constraints and challenges which appeared along with the nurturing process.

The findings for teachers' empathetic ability across their teaching encompassed the conceptual framework used in this study, which was in line with Cooper's empathy classification in teaching and learning (2011). Nodding's care relational theory (2000) was also associated to teachers' perspective that teaching closely related to caring activities in which empathy became the fundamental aspect on it. The analysis of the findings also appealed on teachers' understanding related to both aspects, empathy and caring, as the prominent factors of teacher empathy. This was because it fostered teachers' ability to notice children's emotional needs and respond it with appropriate feelings and thoughts without any judgement or negative labelling. In addition, the practice of teacher empathy among some experienced teachers was referred to teachers' natural responses embedded as their personal value. It provoked them to view the constraints and challenges on empathy expressed by Cooper (2011) not considered as dilemmas while nurturing empathy to young children. They focused on students' feeling to develop their well-being and emotional happiness and building positive relationship with students as well as parents. This study also indicated that the practice of teacher empathy demonstrated among teachers positively influenced to their teacher-student relationship and children's development as a whole because it can build students' trust with their teachers. It apparently supports the existing literature reviews and theoretical frameworks which encompass that teacher empathy has positive impacts in education. This study also adds the value to the scholarship on empathy in education, especially in the context of early childhood in Indonesia.

## **5.2. Implication**

This study illuminates the needs of teachers' training and preparation program for educational institutions to develop teachers' positive perception in displaying empathy to young children within their professionalism in teaching. This can also be an insight to the

stakeholders in creating a curriculum, both stated and hidden, or other pedagogical concepts using the lens of teacher empathy. It reflects an effort to create the effective sustainable development through the establishment of early childhood education.

### **5.3 Suggestion**

This research still needs to be improved, such as numbers of participants and the methods used. Case study or descriptive study can be implemented to add more insights to the richness of data. Interviewing male preschool teachers engaged in the learning process will be probably useful to deeply explore the concept of empathy in education based on different thoughts of gender and find the comparison between them. Geographical coverage is also one of the limitations of this research. It is hoped that this research can be beneficial for researchers, authorities, and teachers' views on developing empathy in the perception year. The perspective of empathy in early childhood education from experienced teachers is hoped to be responded as a well-planned program to develop its awareness among stakeholders in the respective institutions. Therefore, further research is supposed to give better and wider understanding related to empathy in early childhood education to improve our education quality that will excel young generation with good empathetic ability for adapting in the future life.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Interview Sheet (English)

#### Participant's Data

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Name :  
Email :  
Age :  
Education :  
Name of School :  
Position :  
Teaching Level :  
Teaching Experience (year) :  
Numbers of Children :  
Gender/age (children) :

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1. In your opinion, what do you know about 'empathy'? (with example)
2. How do you know children's feeling if they are happy or sad?
3. What do you do while facing students who make a mistake? (for example: coming late or spilling water)
4. How do you understand empathy (in general condition)?
5. In your opinion, what is the difference of empathy and sympathy? (flowing to the conversation)
6. In your opinion, is empathy important in the process of teaching and learning?
7. In the process of teaching and learning, to what extent empathy should be practice? (with example)
8. To what extent is empathy needed as preschool teachers? (with examples)
9. Do you have a specific approach to face children who need empathetic concerns? (with example).
10. Based on your personal experience, what impacts do you feel in practicing teacher empathy in the classroom setting? (such as: building teacher-student relationship)
11. Do you find any constraints or challenges in practicing teacher empathy during the process of teaching and learning?
12. How do you tackle the constraints/challenges?
13. Based on your personal experience, which one is more challenging in nurturing empathy between students at school and children at home? Are there any different methods on it?
14. Do you find any constraints or challenges in nurturing empathy to own children at home? If yes, how do you tackle it?

#### Note:

In developing this interview instrument, I firstly focused on the research questions (as the primary guideline). Then, I explored the samples of interview questions from various research papers with similar topics to find the patterns and formulated new questions based on the focus of this project, adjusted to the need of its objectives and the research questions.

## Appendix 2: Mind Map of The Interview Questions

Topic	Question	Objective
Perception	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In your opinion, what do you know about ‘empathy’? (with example)</li> <li>2. How do you know children’s feeling if they are happy or sad?</li> <li>3. What do you do while facing students who make a mistake? (for example: coming late or spilling water)</li> </ol>	Exploring how teachers perceive empathy (RQ 1)
Understanding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you understand empathy (in general condition)?</li> <li>2. In your opinion, what is the difference of empathy and sympathy? (flowing to the conversation)</li> <li>3. In your opinion, is empathy important in the process of teaching and learning?</li> <li>4. In the process of teaching and learning, to what extent empathy should be practice? (with example)</li> <li>5. To what extent is empathy needed as preschool teachers? (with examples)</li> </ol>	Exploring how teachers understand the whole concept of teacher empathy related to teaching and learning process. (RQ 2)
Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you have a specific approach to face children who need empathetic concerns? (with example).</li> <li>2. Based on your personal experience, what impacts do you feel in practicing teacher empathy in the classroom setting? (such as: building teacher-student relationship)</li> <li>3. Do you find any constraints or challenges in practicing teacher empathy during the process of teaching and learning?</li> <li>4. How do you tackle the constraints/challenges?</li> <li>5. Based on your personal experience, which one is more challenging in nurturing empathy between students at school and children at home? Are there any different methods on it?</li> <li>6. Do you find any constraints or challenges in nurturing empathy to own children at home? If yes, how do you tackle it?</li> </ol>	Exploring teachers’ lived experiences in practicing teacher empathy at school and at home. (RQ 3)

### Appendix 3: Lembar Wawancara (Bahasa Indonesia)

#### Data Partisipan

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##### *Data responden*

Nama :  
Email :  
Usia :  
Pendidikan :  
Sekolah :  
Posisi :  
Level mengajar :  
Pengalaman mengajar (th) :  
Jumlah Anak :  
Gender/usia :

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##### *Pertanyaan wawancara:*

1. Menurut Bapak/Ibu, apa itu empati? (contoh)
2. Bagaimana cara bapak/ibu mengetahui perasaan anak murid yang sedang bersedih/bahagia?
3. Apa yang Anda lakukan ketika menemui murid melakukan kesalahan? (pakai kasus missal terlambat/menumpahkan air)
4. Bapak/ibu memahami empati itu seperti apa?
5. Apa bedanya empati dan simpati menurut bapak/ibu? (flow to the conversation)
6. Kalau di dalam proses belajar dan mengajar itu sendiri, dalam hal apa saja empati bisa diterapkan? (contoh)
7. Menurut Bapak/Ibu, seberapa pentingkah empati dalam proses belajar dan mengajar di kelas?
8. Dalam kondisi apa saja Bapak/Ibu merasa peran empati sangat dibutuhkan sebagai guru? (contoh)
9. Apakah ada pendekatan khusus yang Bapak/Ibu lakukan ketika harus menghadapi anak murid yang sedang membutuhkan perhatian (*empathetic concern*)? (Contoh)
10. Dampak atau nilai apakah yang Bapak/Ibu rasakan dalam mempraktikkan empati di kelas? (misal: peningkatan hubungan siswa-guru)
11. Adakah kesulitan yang Bapak/Ibu temui dalam mempraktikkan empati selama proses belajar dan mengajar?
12. Bagaimana cara Bapak/Ibu menghadapi kesulitan tersebut?
13. Berdasarkan pengalaman Bapak/Ibu, manakah yang lebih sulit antara menanamkan empati pada murid di sekolah dan anak sendiri di rumah? Apakah ada perbedaan metode antara keduanya?
14. Apakah Bapak/Ibu menemukan tantangan dalam menanamkan empati pada anak sendiri di rumah? Jika ada, bagaimana Bapak/Ibu menyikapinya?

#### Appendix 4: Observation Sheet (English)

##### Data

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School :  
Address :  
Date :

No.	Aspects	Checklist (x/√)	Note
1	The school has a value to create empathetic environment (referring to the school vision and mission).		
2	The school members (staff and teachers) create empathetic environment through children-friendly approach. (example: giving empathetic responsiveness, smiling, greeting, etc).		
3	Teachers communicate with students empathetically , such as through body/face gesture and voice intonation.		
4	Teachers face students' traits empathetically (when students make a mistake, teachers responded in a good way without being angry or shouting).		
5	In overall, empathetic responsiveness can be clearly seen in the school / during teaching (through basic communication).		

##### Note:

I developed this observation instrument to focus on the third research question in which it needs an emphasis from teachers' explanation during the interview process. First, I made a draft of some aspects to be observed (developed after testing the interview instrument to one participant). Second, I explored the samples of observation aspects from various research papers with similar topics and arranged the new one adjusted to this study.

## Appendix 5: Lembar Observasi (Bahasa Indonesia)

### Data

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Sekolah :  
 Alamat :  
 Tanggal :

No.	Aspek	Checklist (x/√)	Keterangan
1	Sekolah memiliki value membangun suasana penuh empati (dilihat dari visi dan misi)		
2	Staff dan guru membangun suasana penuh empati dengan melakukan pendekatan ramah anak (ex: menunjukkan keakraban seperti menyapa, bertanya, tersenyum)		
3	Guru memberikan perlakuan pada anak dengan penuh empati, dilihat dari cara berkomunikasi (intonasi suara dan gesture guru).		
4	Guru menyikapi masalah anak dengan penuh empati (ketika anak melakukan kesalahan, guru memberikan respon yang baik, seperti tidak seketika marah atau membentak)		
5	Secara keseluruhan, perilaku penuh empati dapat dengan mudah dilihat dari cara guru mengajar atau memperlakukan murid (melalui komunikasi dasar saat anak memanggil atau membutuhkan guru)		

## Appendix 6: Consent Form (English)

I have read or got a brief explanation, consciously understand, and know regarding the purpose, objectives, and risks which possibly appear on this study. I have been also given a chance to ask questions related to the needs of data collection and it (the questions) has been answered satisfactorily. In the meantime, I have a right to propose a resignation of my involvement in this study. Therefore, I declare to **agree/disagree**<sup>\*)</sup> to participate in this study entitled:

“Exploring Teacher Empathy in Early Childhood Education: Perception, Understanding, and Practice”

I voluntarily choose to participate in this study and I will also be given a copy of explanation sheet and consent form (I have signed) as my personal file.

I agree:

**Yes/No**<sup>\*)</sup>

	Date:	Signature
Participant's Name: Age: Adress/School Name:		
Interviewer's Name:		
Note:		

\*) strikethrough for unnecessary info

## **Appendix 7: Surat Pernyataan Persetujuan (Psp) Untuk Ikut Serta Dalam Penelitian (Bahasa Indonesia)**

Saya telah membaca atau memperoleh penjelasan, sepenuhnya menyadari, mengerti, dan memahami tentang tujuan, manfaat, dan risiko yang mungkin timbul dalam penelitian, serta telah diberi kesempatan untuk bertanya dan telah dijawab dengan memuaskan, juga sewaktu-waktu dapat mengundurkan diri dari keikutsertaannya, maka saya **setuju/tidak setuju** \*) ikut dalam penelitian ini, yang berjudul:

“Exploring Teacher Empathy in Early Childhood Education: Perception, Understanding, and Practice”

Saya dengan sukarela memilih untuk ikut serta dalam penelitian ini tanpa tekanan/paksaan siapapun. Saya akan diberikan salinan lembar penjelasan dan formulir persetujuan yang telah saya tandatangani untuk arsip saya.

Saya setuju:

**Ya/Tidak** \*)

	Tanggal:	Tanda tangan (bila tidak bisa dapat digunakan cap jempol)
Nama Peserta: Usia: Alamat:		
Nama Peneliti:		
Catatan:		

\*) coret yang tidak perlu

## Appendix 8: Quirkos Canvas Coding

# Main Canvas Views

## Quirks Canvas - Primary

