



A MULTICULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE EMPATHETIC BEHAVIOUR OF SCHOOL TEACHERS

Dr. K. Ezhilrajan*

Abstract: *Empathy is an act which is deliberate and which enables one to learn more about people and relationship with other peoples. Empathy is one of the strongest tool which leads one to the building of trust, creating a platform for effective understanding, better and improved communication and relationships on other people. But, this strong tool is nevertheless least practiced in the society and least prevalent among the teacher community. Thus, the present study aims at finding the presence of empathy in the school teachers as teachers are the classroom leaders and a better creator of the desired world. Also the study is undergone in two different states of India viz. Tamil Nadu and Kerala State. The study found out that female school teachers and School teachers belonging to Hindu religion of both Tamil Nadu and Kerala State (Salem and Palakkad District respectively) show higher level of Empathetic behaviour than other teacher groups. On one hand, it is clear that Tamil Nadu school teachers from urban locality and backward community teacher group do possess greater empathy than other teacher groups within Tamil Nadu state. On the other hand, Kerala School teachers from rural locality and most backward community teacher group possess greater empathy than other teacher groups within Kerala State.*

Key Words: *Empathy, Classroom Leaders, Empathy Quotient, Tamil Nadu and Kerala State*

*Associate Professor, Department of Education, Vinayaka Missions University, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India



INTRODUCTION

Many a times Empathy is misconceived as sympathy, but that is not so. There are subtle differences between Empathy and Sympathy. Empathy is heartbreaking as one experience other person's pain and joy, whereas Sympathy is just feeling sorry for someone or something. It is fairly easy to feel sympathetic to other difficulties, but being empathic is harder to accomplish. Empathy is defined as the experience of understanding another person's condition from their perspective or shall be stated as the ability to look at the world as another person in order to share or understand another person's feelings, need, concerns and emotional state. Thus, Empathy is a selfless act which enables one to learn more about people and relationships with people. Empathy is just an ability that shall be developed in people when constantly practiced.

NEED FOR EMPATHETIC SKILL TO THE LEADERS

Empathy is an important skill that all leaders shall possess. It helps the leaders able to understand, relate and to be sensitive to their colleagues and communities where they happen to survive. An Empathetic leader strives hard to understand why and what really happened for each behind the scene. Some leaders are gifted with this skill whereas many leaders lack empathy in them. Leadership is all about relationship with others. Followers weigh leaders in terms of the personal impact made by the leaders on one's life and in turn powerful leaders value their followers as individuals. Allowing the followers to contribute to a common goal in a meaningful way is far-more better than penalizing someone for the sake of an imagined outcome. Thus, empathy is far more critical to good leadership than any other skills and it is a known fact that leadership connected with empathy shall prolong a long way towards establishing name and fame. Empathy may also be taught as a business strategy to the leaders. Researches have shown that individuals, who are successful as business leaders, teachers, parents, spouses etc., do possess the skill of empathy in common.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Teachers are the leaders who bring about changes in the field of education. Teachers now-a-days, are serving as research colleagues, advisors, mentors to students and sometimes teachers too, in order to facilitate professional development activities as masters and model teachers. Teachers also act as members of school-based leadership teams, instructional



support teams and leaders of change efforts (Livingston, 1992). Teacher leadership is characterized by a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working together collaboratively. Working together requires a lot of understanding among each other. In most schools 'top-down' leadership model dominates a lot and thus teacher leadership always remains unsuccessful. In order for teacher leadership to be embedded, teacher leaders shall therefore strive to develop a relationship of trust with their colleagues and hence develop a kind of Empathetic leadership skills in them, and here the relevance to the present study emerges as to find out the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers with respect to a few demographical variables.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala state.
- To analyze the difference in the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers between Tamil Nadu and Kerala State.
- To analyze the difference in the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers between Tamil Nadu and Kerala State with respect to the demographic variables.

HYPOTHESES FRAMED

The following hypotheses were framed realizing the above objectives:

- School Teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala state differ significantly in the presence of empathetic behaviour.
- There is a significant difference in the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala state.
- There is a significant difference in the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu with respect to Gender, Residence locality, Religion and Community.
- There is a significant difference in the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers of Kerala with respect to Gender, Residence locality, Religion and Community.



METHODOLOGY

For the present investigation, Normative Survey method was used to find out the prevalence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu (Salem District) and Kerala state (Palakad District). The study involved 403 secondary and higher secondary teachers who were selected from 24 schools through purposive sampling technique. The sample for the present investigation includes 4 government schools, 4 private schools and 4 aided schools from Salem district from Tamil Nadu and 4 government schools, 4 private schools and 4 aided schools from Palakkad district from Kerala. Also the sample consists of 112 men teachers and 88 women teachers from Tamil Nadu and 112 men teachers and 91 women teachers from Kerala state.

TOOL USED

The tool Empathy Quotient (EQ), developed by Simon Baron-Cohen, University of Cambridge was used in the present study, to find out the prevalence of Empathetic behaviour of school teachers. The tool was specifically developed and standardized and used by mental health professionals in assessing the level of social impairment in certain disorders. Other than that, the tool shall also be used to measure the temperamental empathy of general population. The tool was a 60 item questionnaire exclusively designed to measure the empathy in adults. Off the 60 items, 20 items (2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17, 20, 23, 24, 30, 31, 33, 40, 45, 47, 51, 53 and 56) were filler items and were included to distract the participant from a relentless focus on empathy.

SCORING PROCEDURE

The tool has 4 responses against each statement like Strongly Agree, Slightly Agree, Slightly Disagree and Strongly Disagree. A score of 2 and 1 is given for Strongly Agree and Slightly Agree respectively for the items 1, 6, 19, 22, 25, 26, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59 and 60 and a score of 2 and 1 is given for Strongly Disagree and Slightly Disagree respectively for the items 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 21, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 39, 46, 48, 49 and 50.



RESULTS

Table – 1: Descriptive statistics of the Empathetic Behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala State **Max Score: 80**

State	Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD
Tamil Nadu Teachers	Empathy	School Teachers	200	39.72	5.53
	Gender	Male	112	39.30	5.49
		Female	88	40.25	5.56
	Locality	Rural	62	38.05	4.37
		Urban	138	40.47	5.83
	Religion	Hindu	99	41.93	5.81
		Christian	64	37.19	4.22
		Muslim	37	38.19	4.31
	Community	SC / ST	41	36.85	5.64
		MBC	53	39.28	5.44
		BC	76	41.68	5.07
		OC	30	39.43	4.90
Kerala Teachers	Empathy	School Teachers	203	40.00	4.94
	Gender	Male	112	39.72	4.86
		Female	91	40.33	5.04
	Locality	Rural	99	40.11	5.22
		Urban	104	39.88	4.68
	Religion	Hindu	69	42.87	4.48
		Christian	90	39.32	4.56
		Muslim	44	36.86	3.97
	Community	SC / ST	52	39.96	5.34
		MBC	58	41.22	5.04
		BC	46	38.96	3.82
		OC	47	39.53	5.15

From the above table, it is evident that the mean empathy scores of teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala are almost equal and almost 50 % when compared with the maximum possible score of the Empathy tool. Furthermore, it is noted that the mean empathy score of school teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Salem and Palakkad District respectively) is above 30 (**as per the description given in the manual of EQ tool**) and hence it is inferred that the school teachers of Salem and Palakkad District do possess and practice empathy among their colleagues and with others in general.



Table – 2: Significance of difference in the presence of Empathetic Behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala State **Max Score: 80**

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Tamil Nadu Teachers	200	39.72	5.53	0.53	Not Significant
Kerala Teachers	203	40.00	4.94		

The table above clearly shows the difference between the two groups and also the table value of 't' is greater than that of the calculated 't' ratio. Hence it is inferred that there is no significant difference between the mean scores in the presence of empathetic behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala State (Salem and Palakkad District respectively) when the entire sample is taken into consideration.

Table – 3: Significance of difference in the Empathetic Behaviour of school teachers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala State with respect to their Demographic Variables **Max Score: 80**

State	Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t / F	P
Tamil Nadu	Gender	Male	112	39.30	5.49	1.20	Not Significant
		Female	88	40.25	5.56		
	Locality	Rural	62	38.05	4.37	2.92	< 0.005
		Urban	138	40.47	5.83		
	Religion	Hindu	99	41.93	5.81	18.94	< 0.001
		Christian	64	37.19	4.22		
		Muslim	37	38.19	4.31		
	Community	SC / ST	41	36.85	5.64	7.72	< 0.001
		MBC	53	39.28	5.44		
		BC	76	41.68	5.07		
OC		30	39.43	4.90			
Kerala	Gender	Male	112	39.72	4.86	0.87	Not Significant
		Female	91	40.33	5.04		
	Locality	Rural	99	40.11	5.22	0.27	Not Significant
		Urban	104	39.88	4.68		
	Religion	Hindu	69	42.87	4.48	26.82	< 0.001
		Christian	90	39.32	4.56		
		Muslim	44	36.86	3.97		
	Community	SC / ST	52	39.96	5.34	2.04	Not Significant
		MBC	58	41.22	5.04		
		BC	46	38.96	3.82		
OC		47	39.53	5.15			



It is evident and clear from the above table that there is no significant difference between the groups with respect to Gender of the school teachers of Tamil Nadu State. Also it is to be noted that there is a significant difference between the groups with respect to the variables Locality, Religion and Community of the school teachers of Tamil Nadu State as the calculated 't' / 'F' value is greater than the table value of 't' / 'F'. It should also be noted that Tamil Nadu School teachers from urban area show greater level of presence of Empathetic behaviour than rural School teachers.

With regard to the school teachers of Kerala State, there is no significant difference between the groups with respect to the variables Gender, Locality and Community. Whereas with respect to the Religion of school teachers the 'F' value is found significant as the calculated 'F' value is greater than the table value. Hence, significant difference is found among the Kerala State School teachers of different religious background in their presence of Empathetic behaviour.

To find out the difference between each of the two groups of the obtained significant 'F' value, post-hoc Scheffe's test is given below.

Table – 4: Post-hoc Scheffe's test showing significance of difference with respect to Religion and Community of Tamil Nadu teachers and Religion of Kerala Teachers

State	Variable	Groups	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P
Tamil Nadu	Religion	Muslim vs Christian	1.002	1.05	NS
		Muslim vs Hindu	- 3.74	0.98	< 0.001
		Christian vs Hindu	- 4.74	0.82	< 0.001
	Community	FC vs MBC	0.15	1.20	NS
		FC vs BC	- 2.25	1.14	NS
		FC vs SC/ST	2.58	1.27	NS
		MBC vs BC	- 2.40	0.94	NS
		MBC vs SC/ST	2.43	1.10	NS
		BC vs SC/ST	4.83	1.02	< 0.001
Kerala	Religion	Muslim vs Christian	- 2.46	0.81	< 0.05
		Muslim vs Hindu	- 6.01	0.85	< 0.001
		Christian vs Hindu	- 3.55	0.71	< 0.001

With respect to the Religion of Tamil Nadu School teachers, the difference between Muslim and Hindu and Christian and Hindu seems to be significant at 0.001 level of significance. It is also clearly evident that Tamil Nadu School teachers belonging to Hindu Religion possess greater mean score than Muslim and Christian, which means Tamil Nadu School teachers



belonging to Hindu religion do show greater presence of empathetic behaviour than Tamil Nadu School teachers of other religion.

With respect to the Community of Tamil Nadu School teachers, the difference between Backward Community and SC/ST Community seems to be significant at 0.001 level. Also the school teachers belonging to Backward Community show greater presence of Empathetic behaviour than school teachers belonging to SC/ST Community.

With respect to the Religion of Kerala School teachers, the difference between Muslim and Christian, Muslim and Hindu and Christian and Hindu seems to be significant at 0.05, 0.001 and 0.001 respectively. It is also important to note that Kerala School teachers belonging to Hindu religion show greater empathetic behaviour than teachers belonging to Christian and Muslim religion.

CONCLUSION

The present study presented a comprehensive view of the Empathetic behaviour of school teachers of two different cultures viz. Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that female school teachers and School teachers belonging to Hindu religion of both Tamil Nadu and Kerala State (Salem and Palakkad District respectively) show higher level of Empathetic behaviour than other teacher groups. On one hand, it is clear that Tamil Nadu school teachers from urban locality and backward community teacher group do possess greater empathy than other teacher groups within Tamil Nadu state. On the other hand, Kerala School teachers from rural locality and most backward community teacher group possess greater empathy than other teacher groups within Kerala State.

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