

# The Power of Empathy and Emotional Skills

## *Enhancing Classroom Climate in Arab High Schools*

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the impact of empathy and emotion management on classroom climate perception among Arab high school teachers in Israel, aiming to clarify how these emotional capabilities contribute to creating a more positive classroom atmosphere. Specifically, the study explores the relationships between teachers' empathy and emotion management skills and their perceptions of classroom satisfaction, cohesion, competitiveness, difficulty, and friction, while examining differences in empathy levels between homeroom and non-homeroom teachers. Using a quantitative methodology, 120 teachers from five Arab high schools in northern Israel completed surveys to assess their emotional skills and perceptions of classroom climate. The findings indicate significant positive correlations between empathy and emotion management and teachers' perception of classroom satisfaction and cohesion. In contrast, emotion management negatively correlated with perceptions of classroom competitiveness, while both empathy and emotion management showed negative correlations with perceived difficulty and friction. A notable difference in empathy was observed between homeroom and non-homeroom teachers, with homeroom teachers demonstrating higher levels of empathy. This research offers practical and theoretical contributions by providing insights into how emotional skills influence classroom dynamics, a valuable resource for educators and counselors aiming to enhance classroom environments. Educational counselors can leverage these insights to map school climate according to teachers' emotional abilities, guiding interventions to strengthen positive classroom climates. However, the study's focus on a specific population limits generalizability, and further research across diverse educational contexts is recommended. This study's originality lies in highlighting the central role of emotional skills in shaping optimal classroom climates, presenting a unique perspective on fostering supportive learning environments.

## INTRODUCTION

The current research focuses on examining the relationships between empathy and emotional management abilities among teachers and their perception of classroom climate in Arab high schools in Israel. Teachers' work

today is particularly challenging, as they encounter various issues such as student disciplinary problems, students' personal difficulties, complex relationships with parents, low motivation, and more. Nevertheless, there are high expectations placed on teachers, with everyone wanting optimal education for their children. Teachers need emotional tools and skills they can use in their work to ensure an optimal educational climate within the classroom that enables a positive learning atmosphere.

Classroom climate is defined as teachers' perception of the social and learning atmosphere in the classroom, which includes factors such as social cohesion, sense of belonging, norms, and conduct within the educational framework (Berkowitz, Mor & Ron, 2015). The teacher's perspective is especially important, as research shows that teachers play a central role in creating classroom climate and influencing relationships between students (Davis, 2023). Emotion management refers to an individual's ability to manage, control, and modify the intensity of emotional characteristics they experience while adapting emotions to a given situation (Kozubal et al., 2023). According to research literature, teachers who can effectively manage their emotions and show empathy towards their students contribute to creating a positive classroom climate and reduce phenomena of disorder and stress among students (Khalil et al., 2017; Zubeidat et al., 2019).

While empathy is defined as the ability to understand and identify with others' emotions, referring to the well-being of others in interpersonal interactions (Algarabel, Cohen-Or, Rosenblum & Sternberg, 2012). Empathy is considered a central factor in interpersonal relationships and is positively associated with social and pro-social behavior, contributing to promoting people's involvement in moral and altruistic behavior (Batson, 2011; Masri et al., 2022).

Emotion management is a concept referring to an individual's ability to manage, control, and modify the intensity of emotional characteristics they experience while adapting emotions to a given situation (Khalil et al., 2017). It is also perceived as a critical skill in the educational field (Gross, 2015). Teachers experience daily work under explicit and implicit pressure, created by demands and responsibilities, in addition to pressure created by interpersonal relationships between them and the staff, parents, and students (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017). Despite the great importance of empathy and emotion management ability in teacher functioning, particularly in the workplace, there is a lack of research examining this topic among teachers in Arab society in Israel. Most research in this field has been conducted in Western populations (Goroshit & Hen, 2016; Oplatka, 2018), therefore requiring a deeper examination of how teachers in Arab society perceive classroom climate and the relationships between these emotional skills and classroom climate (Al-Khatib & Lash, 2017).

The research aims to fill this gap by examining the relationships between empathy, emotion management, and classroom climate perception among teachers from Arab society in Israel. Additionally, the research will compare

homeroom teachers to non-homeroom teachers, examining possible differences in their level of empathy and emotion management ability. The contribution of this research is twofold: at the scientific level, it is expected to deepen understanding of the relationships between emotional variables and classroom climate perception in different sectors; and at the practical level, its findings may assist school educational counselors in building and adapting interventions tailored to the unique needs of teachers and students in Arab society, aiming to improve and enhance emotional skills to improve the educational and social climate in their classrooms.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUNDS

In light of the complex and often high-pressure environment within classrooms, teachers need strong emotional skills, particularly empathy and emotion management, to foster a positive learning climate. Despite extensive research highlighting the importance of these skills in Western contexts, there is limited investigation into how these emotional capabilities influence classroom climate perceptions among teachers in Arab society in Israel (Goroshit & Hen, 2016; Oplatka, 2018). This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the impact of empathy and emotion management on classroom climate perceptions among Arab high school teachers, with a focus on differences between homeroom and non-homeroom teachers (Al-Khatib & Lash, 2017).

## EMPATHY

Empathy is a multidisciplinary concept that has received various definitions over the years, mainly due to its central role in understanding human behavior, interpersonal communication, and education. One of the central aspects of empathy is the ability to understand another's world and experience their experiences. Empathy was previously defined (Carkhuff, 1969; Dymond, 1948) as a cognitive and emotional ability to understand another's situation and feel their feelings, while Sullivan (1956) saw it as an innate trait guiding human social responses. Berger (1962) argued that empathy is a process acquired through communication and imitation.

Recent research continues to expand our understanding of empathy and its significance. Levy (2020) notes that empathy is not just a tool for understanding others' emotions but also a key factor in creating effective communication and conflict resolution. He notes that in the modern era, where interpersonal interaction also occurs in digital spaces, empathy plays a critical role in creating healthy connections and preventing social isolation.

More recent studies also focus on empathy's role in complex social structures. Konrath et al. (2018) found that people with high empathic ability tend to be less tolerant of negative social phenomena such as racism and

prejudice. This research found that high empathy is directly related to improving inter-group relations, especially in national and ethnic minority groups. These findings align with Habib-Pelagi's (2014) claims, who emphasized the psychological aspect of empathy in the context of majority-minority relations.

## COMPONENTS OF EMPATHY

According to the R3 model by Zisman and Kupermintz (2016), empathy consists of three main stages: empathic resonance, empathic inference, and empathic response. Empathic resonance refers to one's ability to unconsciously experience others' emotions, a finding demonstrated in neuropsychological studies that revealed similar brain regions are activated when we see someone experiencing a particular emotion (Zaku & Ochsner, 2012). Empathic inference focuses on the conscious understanding of others' emotions and their causes, while empathic response depends on one's motivation and desire to respond to others positively.

In recent years, researchers like Dankley et al. (2020) have emphasized the importance of self-awareness as part of the empathic process. They note that teachers and education professionals who develop high self-awareness can strengthen their empathy components and use them to empower their students.

## EMPATHY AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL LIFE

Empathy widely affects many life domains, especially in therapeutic professions such as counseling, psychology, and teaching. Empathy was found to be a trait predicting success in teaching and creating strong connections with students. Hen and Goroshit's (2016) research found that empathetic teachers improve their students' sense of belonging and security, contribute to creating a positive classroom climate, and reduce violent behaviors. This finding is supported by Schwartz et al.'s (2020) research, which showed that teachers with high empathic abilities tend to create deep emotional connections with their students, improving students' educational and social outcomes.

Meanwhile, empathy has been found to have a direct impact on mental health. Personality research found that high empathy predicts psychological resilience and better coping with stress situations (Choi et al., 2016). Moreover, research conducted by Song and Shi (2017) among Chinese teaching students emphasized that empathy is related to personality traits such as openness to experiences, extroversion, and agreeableness, and recommended developing educational strategies to strengthen empathy among future teachers.

## EMPATHY AMONG TEACHERS

Teachers serve as central figures in developing their students' emotional capabilities, and empathy is one of the main tools for this purpose. Chen (2010) notes that teachers need not only to transfer academic knowledge but also to develop meaningful emotional connections with their students. Empathy allows teachers to sense their students' emotional needs and support them during the learning process.

Recent studies, such as Dolan et al. (2022), emphasize that empathy among teachers not only contributes to students' academic success but also strengthens their psychological resilience. Students who experience a sense of belonging and security in the classroom contribute to improving classroom climate and reducing instances of violence.

## EMOTION MANAGEMENT AMONG TEACHERS

Emotion management is an important concept in understanding human behavior and is particularly significant in intensive work environments such as teaching. Researchers indicate that emotion management involves processes through which people influence their emotional experiences (Valente & Lourenço, 2020), understanding that influencing emotions includes control over experiential, cognitive, behavioral, and even physiological aspects (Gross, 1998; Lee, 2021). Research emphasizes that emotion management among teachers is intended to maintain a stable educational environment focused on learning, even when teachers experience negative emotions such as anger and frustration (Meyer, 2014).

Emotion management is not simple and includes the ability to exercise emotional judgment and control emotions in challenging situations (Niven et al., 2011). Teachers, who face multiple interactions with students, parents, and colleagues, need to develop skills that allow them to handle emotionally charged situations while maintaining professional conduct and promoting positive learning experiences in the classroom (Hargreaves, 2000; Oplatka, 2018).

Difficulties in emotional management, manifested in emotional flooding, inability to regulate negative emotions, or impulsive behavior, can negatively affect teachers' functioning and even their mental well-being (Jacobs & Gross, 2014). Negative emotional experiences at work can lead to burnout and damage relationships with students, which affects academic achievement and the quality of classroom interactions (Rudow, 1999).

## EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AMONG TEACHERS

Researchers point to several approaches and strategies that help teachers manage their emotions more effectively (Oliveira et al., 2021):

- Integrative emotional regulation - deep understanding of emotions and their sources, leading to adaptive and goal-oriented behavior (Ryan et al., 2006)
- DBT and art therapy - therapeutic strategies, such as dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), which teach emotional management skills and promote emotional self-control in stressful situations (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989; Hochschild, 2012)
- Schema therapy - this theory emphasizes the role of early experiences in difficulties with emotion management (Khalil et al., 2017)

## **EMOTION MANAGEMENT AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO TEACHING QUALITY**

Proper emotion management is a necessary condition for teachers' professional functioning. It affects their ability to create meaningful connections with students, increase their involvement in learning, and maintain a positive classroom climate (Anderman & Klassen, 2015). Accordingly, teachers who successfully manage their emotions show more positive results in teaching quality and student success (Pekrun & Bühner, 2014).

## **CLASSROOM CLIMATE**

Classroom climate is one of the central components in academic success and influences students' personal and social development. Literature defines classroom climate as the totality of intellectual, social, emotional, and physical aspects in which students learn, influenced by interactions between students, teachers, parents, and the general school environment (Ambrose et al., 2010; Fraser & Fisher, 1986). Research indicates that positive classroom climate encourages a sense of cohesion, empathy, cooperation, and commitment to learning, while negative climate may lead to opposite results and low academic achievement (Brackett et al., 2011; Cohen et al., 2009; Holn et al., 2013).

## **CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND ITS INTERACTION WITH EMPATHY AND EMOTION MANAGEMENT AMONG TEACHERS**

School serves as an important socialization agent after the family and plays a crucial role in shaping students' social and emotional behaviors. Classroom climate is defined as the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environment in which students learn, and it directly affects their emotional and social experiences (Ambrose et al., 2010). Hence, classroom climate is not just a technical or organizational factor, but also represents emotional experiences and interpersonal dynamics between teachers and students and among students themselves (Fraser & Fisher, 1986).

In this context, empathy and emotion management are critical variables in shaping classroom climate. The way teachers manage their emotions and demonstrate empathy towards students affects interpersonal relationships in the classroom and can contribute to creating a positive climate that promotes feelings of support, belonging, and cohesion (Cohen et al., 2009). For example, when teacher's express empathy towards students and identify their emotions, they contribute to improving students' self-confidence and sense of self-worth (Brackett et al., 2011).

## **THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CLASSROOM CLIMATE DIMENSIONS WITH EMPATHY AND EMOTION MANAGEMENT**

The dimensions of classroom climate include, among others, satisfaction, friction, competitiveness, difficulty level, and cohesion (Sidelinger et al., 2012). Each dimension is directly related to emotion management and empathy from teachers. For example, when students experience social cohesion in the classroom, they feel belonging and significance within the group, which strengthens the interpersonal connection between teacher and students and increases the teacher's level of empathy (Holn et al., 2013). Additionally, teachers who invest in creating a challenging and growth-promoting classroom climate, where students are required to handle complex tasks, help increase students' sense of self-efficacy, which is directly influenced by emotional responses and environmental assessment (Peters, 2013).

## **THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN CREATING A POSITIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE**

The teacher, in their role as classroom leader, plays a critical role in creating a positive classroom climate, primarily through their interpersonal behavior and abilities to manage emotions and demonstrate empathy (Frisby et al., 2014). Teachers who demonstrate empathy and are aware of their own emotions and those of their students tend to create a supportive and progressive learning environment where students feel valued and understood (Brackett et al., 2011). Positive models of emotion management can provide students with tools for self-management, strengthening self-confidence, and developing positive interpersonal relationships in the classroom (Darby, 2008). Existing literature emphasizes the importance of teachers listening to their students' emotional needs, where sensitivity and empathy from the teacher are seen as important factors in creating a positive climate that promotes cooperation and support among students (Romo-Escudero et al., 2023). Through proper understanding and management of emotions, teachers can create positive connections with students, leading to improved academic achievement and enhanced sense of belonging and self-esteem. Finally, the interaction between classroom climate, empathy, and emotion management by teachers is

a crucial component in shaping the learning experience. Teachers who demonstrate empathy and manage their emotions effectively create a safe and nurturing environment that helps students develop higher emotional and social capabilities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY, OBJECTIVES, AND QUESTIONS**

The literature review reveals that the teacher's role involves significant stress and burden, stemming from the professional and energetic demands required in the education system (Khalil et al., 2017). Research shows that teachers' levels of empathy and emotion management ability directly affect classroom management and classroom climate (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017), where conflict situations and lack of organizational support may exacerbate these difficulties (Arar, 2017).

Based on these insights, the current research examines the relationship between empathy and emotion management among Arab teachers and their perception of classroom climate, attempting to answer the following question: Is there a relationship between teachers' level of empathy and emotion management and their perception of classroom climate, and are there significant differences in empathy levels between homeroom teachers and non-homeroom teachers? From this question, the following hypotheses were derived:

Hypothesis 1: Assumed there is a significant positive correlation between teachers' level of empathy and dimensions of classroom climate perception (satisfaction, competitiveness, cohesion), such that higher levels of empathy will correlate with more positive classroom climate perception.

Hypothesis 2: Assumed there is a negative correlation between teachers' level of empathy and dimensions of classroom climate perception (friction, difficulty).

Hypothesis 3: Assumed there is a positive correlation between teachers' emotion management and dimensions of classroom climate perception (satisfaction, competitiveness, cohesion), such that higher levels of emotion management will correlate with more positive classroom climate perception.

Hypothesis 4: Assumed there is a negative correlation between emotion management levels and dimensions of classroom climate perception (friction, difficulty).

Hypothesis 5: Assumed there are significant differences in empathy levels between homeroom teachers and non-homeroom teachers, with homeroom teachers showing higher levels of empathy.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**



The current research examined the relationship between empathy and emotion management among teachers and classroom climate using quantitative methodology. Quantitative research is based on the positivist approach, whose main goal is to describe observable objective reality with maximum precision (Shkedi, 2003). The appropriate research design for conducting this study is quantitative-correlational. Based on the positivist stance, this research examined the strength, direction, and significance of various correlations between empathy, emotion management, and classroom climate.

### Sample

The study included 120 Arab teachers from Israel, teaching in high schools in the northern district. The data shows there were 52 male teachers (43.3%), 68 female teachers (56.7%); 66 (55%) held bachelor's degrees, 51 (42.5%) held master's degrees, 3 (2.5%) held doctoral degrees; 58 (48.3%) were Muslim, 27 (22.5%) Christian, 35 (29.2%) Druze; 101 (84.2%) were married, 15 (12.5%) single, 4 divorced (3.3%); 53 (44.2%) lived in cities and 67 (55.8%) in villages. 62 (51.7%) were homeroom teachers and 58 (48.3%) were not. The age range of participating teachers was 22-60, with teaching experience ranging from 1-35 years. Sampling was conducted using the "convenience" method.

**Research Tools** This study used a structured questionnaire consisting of four parts:

A. **Demographic Data Questionnaire:** A personal details questionnaire designed to collect participants' background data.

B. **Empathy Questionnaire:** This questionnaire was taken from Masri's work (2014) and developed by Zisman (2009), who based the new tool on existing valid and recognized questionnaires in the field of intergroup empathy, such as Mehrabian and Epstein's (1972) emotional empathy measurement questionnaire. The empathy questionnaire included 20 items examining three components of empathy through detailed factor analysis: empathic resonance (e.g., "I can tell when someone is trying to hide their true feelings"), empathic inference (e.g., "I can usually understand another's viewpoint, even when I disagree with it"), and empathic response (e.g., "I become sad when I see a lonely stranger in a group"). The reliability of the empathy scale in the current study was  $\alpha=0.67$ .

C. **Classroom Climate Questionnaire (MCI):** Fraser and Frisher's (1983) My Class Inventory (MCI) in its latest edition (Fraser, 1989) contains 25 items. The questionnaire consists of 5 cyclic statements, each cycle including 5 items. The first item in each of the five cycles belongs to "Satisfaction" (S), e.g., "Students enjoy their studies"; the second to "Friction" (F), e.g., "Students always fight with each other"; the third to "Competitiveness" (Cm), e.g., "Students sometimes compete to see who will finish exercises first"; the fourth to "Difficulty" (D), e.g., "The studies in class are very difficult"; and the fifth to "Cohesion" (Ch), e.g., "All class children are friends". For this study, teachers' responses were scored "3" for "yes" and "1" for "no". For reverse items, recoding was performed so that the negative response received a "3" while the positive response received a "1". The overall score for each statement is the sum of all points from the 5 items comprising the given category. The score for each

statement can range from 5 points minimum (indicating negative classroom climate) to 15 points maximum (indicating optimal classroom climate). In the current study, for a population of 120 subjects, the following reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were obtained: Satisfaction (0.54); Friction (0.74); Competitiveness (0.82); Difficulty (0.66); and Cohesion (0.78).

D. Emotion Management Questionnaire: This part of the questionnaire was developed by Williams (2007), who reported high reliability through Cronbach's alpha values ( $\alpha=0.88$ ). In its original version, the questionnaire included 30 statements, rated on a scale from 1 (not at all characteristic of me) to 7 (highly characteristic of me). Examples of statements include: "I change the components of a situation that might have an undesirable effect on others", "When a situation bothers others, I direct their attention away from the troubling aspect of the problem", "When I want others to experience more positive emotions such as enjoyment, joy, and fun, I put their problems in proper perspective". The reliability for the questionnaire was checked for internal consistency between scores on questionnaire statements using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability value in the current study was  $\alpha=0.54$ .

#### **Research Procedure**

This research was conducted after researchers approached school principals from several randomly selected Arab communities in northern Israel. The researchers received principals' approval to administer questionnaires to teachers during monthly staff meetings, explained the research purpose, importance, and contribution, and emphasized research ethics. Teachers who agreed to participate completed the questionnaires after being assured of anonymity and that the information would only be used for current research purposes. Questionnaire completion time ranged between 25-30 minutes.

#### **Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis was conducted in several stages according to research questions: First stage: Descriptive statistics were conducted to create frequency tables for socio-demographic data. Second stage: Pearson correlations were conducted to examine correlations between variables. Third stage: A t-test was conducted to examine differences between homeroom and non-homeroom teachers.

#### **Findings**

The purpose of the current work is to examine relationships between levels of empathy and emotion management, and classroom climate in dimensions (satisfaction, friction, competitiveness, difficulty, and cohesion). After analyzing socio-demographic data, the researcher conducted Pearson correlations to test the first four research hypotheses, examining correlations between variables. Subsequently, a t-test was conducted to test the fifth hypothesis, examining differences between two independent samples. Research findings will be presented according to the order of hypotheses.

## FIRST RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The first research hypothesis assumed there would be a significant positive correlation between teachers' level of empathy and dimensions of classroom climate perception (satisfaction, competitiveness, cohesion), such that higher levels of empathy would correlate with more positive classroom climate perception. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The correlations are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Pearson Correlations Examining Relationships Between Classroom Climate Dimensions and Level of Empathy (N=120)

<b>Classroom Climate</b>	<b>Empathy</b>
Satisfaction	0.61**
Competitiveness	-0.00
Cohesion	0.40**

\*\*p<0.01

From Table 3, the following findings emerge:

1. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between empathy and the satisfaction dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of empathy increases, the level of satisfaction increases and vice versa.
2. No correlation was found between the level of empathy and the competitiveness dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = -0.00$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).
3. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between teachers' level of empathy and the cohesion dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of empathy increases, the level of cohesion increases and vice versa.

### Second Research Hypothesis

The second research hypothesis assumed there would be a negative correlation between teachers' level of empathy and dimensions of classroom climate perception (friction, difficulty). To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The correlations are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Pearson Correlations Examining Relationships Between Classroom Climate Dimensions and Level of Empathy (N=120)

<b>Classroom Climate</b>	<b>Empathy</b>
Friction	-0.50**
Difficulty	-0.48**

\*\*p<0.01

From Table 4, the following findings emerge:

1. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between empathy and the friction dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = -0.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of empathy increases, the level of friction decreases and vice versa.
2. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between empathy and the difficulty dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = -0.48$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of empathy increases, the level of perceived difficulty decreases and vice versa.

### HYPOTHESIS 3: THIRD RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The third research hypothesis assumed there would be a positive correlation between teachers' emotion management and dimensions of classroom climate perception (satisfaction, competitiveness, cohesion), such that higher levels of emotion management would correlate with more positive classroom climate perception. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The correlations are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Pearson Correlations Examining Relationships Between Classroom Climate Dimensions and Level of Emotion Management (N=120)

<b>Classroom Climate</b>	<b>Emotion Management</b>
Satisfaction	0.53**
Competitiveness	-0.30**
Cohesion	0.45**

\*\* $p < 0.01$

From Table 5, the following findings emerge:

1. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between emotion management and the satisfaction dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of emotion management increases, the level of satisfaction increases and vice versa.
2. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between emotion management and the competitiveness dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = -0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of emotion management increases, the level of competitiveness decreases and vice versa.
3. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between teachers' level of emotion management and the cohesion dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of emotion management increases, the level of cohesion increases and vice versa.

The Fourth Research Hypothesis assumed a negative correlation between the level of emotion management and the dimensions of classroom climate perception (friction, difficulty). To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. The correlations are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Pearson Correlations Examining the Relationships Between Classroom Climate Dimensions and Level of Emotion Management (N=120)

<b>Classroom Climate</b>	<b>Emotion Regulation</b>
Friction	-0.50**
Difficulty	-0.49**

\*\*p&lt;0.01

From Table 6, the following emerges:

1. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between emotion management and the friction dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = -0.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of emotion management increases, the level of friction decreases and vice versa.

2. A statistically significant negative correlation was found between the level of emotion management and the difficulty dimension of classroom climate ( $r_p = -0.49$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as the level of emotion management increases, the level of difficulty decreases and vice versa.

The Fifth Research Hypothesis assumed that there would be significant differences in empathy levels between homeroom teachers and non-homeroom teachers, with homeroom teachers exhibiting higher levels of empathy. To test this hypothesis, a t-test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7:** T-test Results Examining Differences in Empathy Levels Between Homeroom and Non-Homeroom Teachers

<b>Variable</b>		<b>Homeroom Teachers (N=62)</b>	<b>Non-Homeroom Teachers (N=58)</b>	<b>t(118)</b>
Empathy	Mean	4.40	4.18	1.98*
	SD	0.61	0.58	

\*p&lt;0.05

To test the hypothesis that there is a difference between the mean scores of homeroom and non-homeroom teachers in empathy levels, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The findings in Table 7 indicate a significant difference between the means ( $t(118) = 1.98$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The mean empathy level among homeroom teachers ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) was found to be higher than the mean empathy level among non-homeroom teachers ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this current study was to examine the relationship between empathy and emotion management among Arab high school teachers and

optimal classroom climate. The following discussion will be divided according to the five research hypotheses of the current study, discussing each hypothesis separately.

The first hypothesis assumed that there would be a significant positive correlation between teachers' level of empathy and dimensions of classroom climate perception, including satisfaction, competitiveness, and cohesion. The research results partially confirm the hypothesis, indicating a significant positive correlation between teachers' empathy levels and the dimensions of satisfaction and cohesion in the classroom, but no significant correlation was found between empathy levels and competitiveness.

These findings regarding satisfaction and cohesion align with previous research showing that empathy plays a significant role in perceiving positive classroom climate. Studies indicate that empathy, which allows teachers to understand students' emotional states, contributes to creating a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages student satisfaction and strengthens social cohesion in the classroom (Aldrup, et.al., 2022; Lee, 2019). Habib-Pelagi (2014) emphasizes that empathy is a critical developmental trait that enables identification and understanding of internal processes in others, leading to more positive teacher-student interactions and strengthening group belonging and connection. When teachers demonstrate empathy, they provide students with emotional support and guidance, leading to increased student self-confidence and satisfaction with the learning process (Peters, 2013).

Regarding the lack of correlation between empathy and competitiveness, the findings refute this part of the hypothesis. Competitiveness may be influenced by other intervening factors, such as students' personality structure, their motivation level, and classroom teaching style (Longobardi et al., 2020). Research shows that low motivation and low self-efficacy among students may reduce classroom competitiveness, even when the teacher demonstrates high empathy levels (Shaban et al., 2017). Additionally, many high school's separate students into ability groups, which may affect classroom competitiveness, and this might have had a significant impact on the classroom structure studied.

In summary, the first hypothesis was partially confirmed - teacher empathy was found to be positively correlated with classroom satisfaction and cohesion, but not with competitiveness. These results reinforce the importance of empathy as a key mechanism in creating a positive and supportive classroom climate but emphasize that classroom competitiveness is influenced by other factors not examined in this study, and these relationships should continue to be investigated in future research.

The second research hypothesis, which assumed a negative correlation between teachers' empathy levels and dimensions of classroom climate perception (friction and difficulty), was fully confirmed by the current research findings and aligns well with contemporary research trends. According to the Pearson correlation findings, there is a significant negative correlation between teachers' empathy levels and both friction and difficulty, where an increase in empathy is associated with decreased levels of classroom friction and difficulty.

The negative correlation between empathy and friction emphasizes the significant effect that teacher empathy has on the classroom environment. Friction, defined as tension between students themselves or between students and educational staff, is considered an important component in examining classroom climate (Rosenblum & Getlis, 2016). Empathetic teachers, thanks to their ability to identify emotions and support their students (Jennings et al., 2023), contribute to reducing tension, creating a positive atmosphere, and promoting collaboration (Pekrun & Bühner, 2014). Research emphasizes that empathetic connections between teachers and students strengthen students' sense of belonging and security, and improve their social skills, such as respect and acceptance of others (Holn et al., 2013). Additionally, empathetic teachers have been found to reduce violent and bullying behaviors, leading to overall improvement in classroom climate (Konrath & Grynberg, 2013).

These findings align with recent research highlighted in recent years. For example, Kılıç et al. (2021) found that teacher empathy is negatively associated with classroom tensions and promotes a more positive environment that reduces violence and promotes respect and cooperation among students. Additionally, Collie et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of empathy in dealing with friction situations and found that highly empathetic teachers can identify early signs of distress, leading to more successful interventions in situations of friction and difficulties.

The negative correlation between empathy and the difficulty dimension indicates that empathetic teachers can identify stress factors affecting students' abilities and provide them with appropriate emotional support, leading to improved academic and social performance (Schumann et al., 2014). These teachers contribute to reducing difficulty by providing tools for effective stress management, thereby enabling an optimal classroom climate. Greenberg and Jennings (2019) noted that teachers who demonstrate empathy and listening ability contribute to a classroom climate that supports students and reduces stress levels experienced by students in challenging situations.

Furthermore, Rodríguez-Fernández et al. (2022) reinforced these findings, emphasizing that empathic ability significantly contributes to reducing students' feelings of difficulty and frustration by creating a safe and inclusive environment. These findings also align with research indicating that empathetic teachers help their students develop emotional resilience and the ability to cope with social and academic pressures, leading to a reduction in classroom conflicts and difficulties.

The third research hypothesis examined the relationship between teachers' emotion management levels and dimensions of classroom climate perception (satisfaction, competitiveness, and cohesion). Pearson analyses revealed a significant positive correlation between emotion management and satisfaction and cohesion, but a significant negative correlation with competitiveness. The third hypothesis was partially confirmed. Emotion management was found to be related to satisfaction and cohesion in classroom climate; however, there was a negative correlation with competitiveness. The positive correlation found

between emotion management and satisfaction and cohesion aligns with research literature emphasizing the importance of emotion management in teaching. The more a teacher demonstrates high emotional management skills, the more successful they are in creating a supportive, balanced, and caring classroom climate (Krauss et al., 2024). This explains the positive correlation with satisfaction and cohesion dimensions, as teachers who can manage their emotions convey emotional stability to their students, which promotes open communication and a sense of belonging (Pekrun & Bühner, 2014). Additionally, numerous studies indicate that positive emotion management directly affects social interactions in the classroom and leads to a cohesive classroom climate and successful cooperation among students (Arar, 2017).

The negative correlation found between emotion management and competitiveness may stem from the fact that as teachers succeed in managing their emotions effectively, they reduce classroom anxiety and stress, leading to a decrease in competitiveness levels (Emeljanovas et al., 2023). Students feel less need to compete with each other when they experience a more supportive and inclusive climate. Classroom competitiveness is often associated with tension and pressure, and when teachers succeed in creating a learning environment focused on cooperation and mutual support, the level of competitiveness decreases (Fried, 2011). Additionally, the negative correlation can be explained by external influences not examined in this work, such as students' personal motivation or classroom group structure. These factors may affect the sense of competitiveness regardless of the teacher's emotion management (Dovidio et al., 2010). These findings reinforce the importance of developing emotion management skills among teachers to create a positive learning environment but also emphasize the need to examine additional variables such as student motivation and personality for a deeper understanding of the impact of emotion management on competitiveness.

The discussion of the fourth hypothesis findings focuses on the negative correlation found between teachers' emotion management levels and classroom climate dimensions, particularly friction and difficulty. These findings confirm the fourth research hypothesis, which assumed that higher levels of emotion management would correspond with decreased classroom friction and difficulty. The correlations shown in Table 6 indicate that higher levels of emotion management among teachers contribute to decreased levels of friction and difficulty, demonstrating that teachers are better able to handle challenging classroom situations and create a more positive classroom climate. These findings align with existing research literature, which indicates that emotion management is a central component in dealing with classroom pressures (Kilag et al., 2023). According to Masri (2014), emotion management includes the ability to regulate emotions, deal with negative situations, and employ strategies that promote positive mood and coping with difficulties. Teachers who can regulate their emotions succeed in avoiding negative effects of pressure and directing their behavior in ways that promote their educational goals (De Neve et al., 2023).



The teacher's ability to manage emotions is critical for proper classroom management and creating a classroom climate conducive to learning. Research literature shows that teachers who effectively manage their emotions while teaching succeed in creating a more effective learning environment (Pozo-Rico et al., 2023), maintaining discipline, and building positive social relationships with their students (Fried, 2011; Vail, 2010). Moreover, the positive influence of emotion management is not limited to individual students but affects the entire class through "emotional contagion" (Erez et al., 2008), where teacher emotions are transmitted to students and influence their behavior. Additionally, teachers who use emotion management to present challenges to their students in a way that matches their level prevent unnecessary difficulties that could hinder the learning process (Schumann et al., 2014). When teachers set realistic tasks and manage their emotions effectively, they contribute to improving student performance and reducing classroom difficulty levels (Poulou & Denham, 2023).

The findings of the fourth hypothesis confirm the understanding that proper emotion management by teachers contributes to creating a positive classroom climate and reduces friction and difficulty. These findings strengthen the argument that there is a need for teacher training in emotion management as a tool for promoting classroom climate and improving the educational process.

The fifth and final hypothesis posited that there would be significant differences in empathy levels between homeroom teachers and non-homeroom teachers, with homeroom teachers displaying higher levels of empathy. The research findings confirmed this hypothesis, as homeroom teachers indeed reported higher empathy levels compared to non-homeroom teachers. The significant result obtained in the t-test indicates that the difference in empathy levels between the two groups is not coincidental. This finding aligns with research literature demonstrating that homeroom teachers possess higher empathy levels than non-homeroom teachers, which helps them better handle classroom teaching challenges (Pfister et al., 2024). Furthermore, the significant differences found correspond with research literature emphasizing the homeroom teacher's central role in creating a positive classroom climate and managing social and emotional connections with students (Hopson & Lawson, 2011). The homeroom teacher's role, which requires creating supportive and inclusive interactions, is based on components of empathy and sensitivity to students' needs. Additionally, homeroom teachers must deal with emotional and social issues in their daily work, increasing their need for empathetic understanding of students' emotions (Darby, 2008; Archambault et al., 2013).

Moreover, Foecking (2024) notes that positive teacher-student relationships, including honesty, empathy, and warmth, are crucial factors in creating a supportive classroom climate. Homeroom teachers, compared to non-homeroom teachers, are more directly involved in students' lives and the challenges they face, requiring them to develop higher levels of empathy and

the ability to support students both emotionally and socially (Huang, et al., 2024).

### **Cultural Aspects of Arab Society and Their Impact on Research Findings**

Arab society is characterized as a collectivist culture, emphasizing values such as community cohesion, cooperation, mutual support, and family ties. These values significantly influence social relationships and how professionals, like teachers, manage classroom relationships.

1. **Lack of Correlation Between Empathy and Competitiveness:** No significant correlation was found between teachers' empathy levels and classroom competitiveness. A possible explanation relates to Arab society's cultural aspects. Unlike individualistic societies where competitiveness is considered a positive value and motivator for personal achievement, Arab collectivist society emphasizes cooperation and group cohesion. Individual competitiveness may be interpreted as a threat to group unity and classroom social relationships. Therefore, empathy, which focuses on mutual support and cooperation, is not necessarily linked to competitiveness but rather to reducing tensions and focusing on cohesion (Al-Khatib & Lash, 2017).

2. **Impact of Collectivist Culture on Cohesion and Satisfaction:** The findings showing a positive correlation between empathy and cohesion and satisfaction may also be related to collectivist culture. In Arab society, where group cohesion is considered a central value, teachers who demonstrate empathy toward their students contribute to improving the classroom climate by strengthening students' sense of belonging and security (Dallaseh, 2024). Thus, empathy helps create a sense of cohesion and cooperation in the classroom, rather than competition between students (Hofstede, 2011). Additionally, the emphasis on mutual respect and close relationships in Arab culture influences how teachers manage the classroom, leading to higher satisfaction among students (Krauss et al., 2024).

3. **Emotion Management and Reduction of Competitiveness:** A negative correlation was found between emotion management and competitiveness. Teachers who effectively manage their emotions succeed in reducing classroom tension and pressure, which may explain why competitiveness levels decrease when teachers demonstrate good emotion management abilities. In collectivist societies like Arab society, emotion management focuses on creating a harmonious and supportive environment, thus competitiveness is less perceived as a positive means to success (Goroshit & Hen, 2016). Proper emotion management may reduce competition-induced tension and create a more supportive classroom that promotes student cooperation.

It is important to emphasize the implications of the research findings for the educational counselor's role in schools. Based on the research findings, the educational counselor has an important and significant role in leading emotional and social processes at the teacher, classroom, and school levels,

such as developing teachers' empathy and emotion management, as the research found a significant positive correlation between empathy and emotion management and a more positive classroom climate, including satisfaction and cohesion. To this end, the counselor can offer professional workshops focusing on improving teachers' emotional skills, such as emotional self-awareness, identifying student emotions, and optimal management of classroom conflicts, as well as dealing with stress, crisis, and emergency situations.

Furthermore, the research findings provide a platform for the educational counselor to lead training programs and workshops aimed at increasing awareness and training regarding the importance and role of empathy among teachers. Research shows that empathetic teachers can contribute to a positive classroom climate, reduce friction, and improve classroom management (Watanabe et al., 2023). The counselor can guide teachers in identifying student emotions and provide tools for effective emotional coping in the classroom.

Additionally, it is recommended that the educational counselor promote educational approaches and activities that reduce tension and friction in the classroom, whether between teachers and students or among students themselves. Through open dialogue, emotional support, and collaborative activities, student cooperation can be encouraged to create a safe learning environment. The counselor should guide teachers in adopting strategies that reduce competitiveness and promote collaborative work, focusing on creating a supportive and inclusive classroom climate. This intervention helps reduce friction and improve classroom atmosphere and social interactions. Ultimately, the educational counselor's role in improving classroom climate depends on their ability to promote emotional dialogue among teaching staff, provide tools for effective emotion management in the classroom, and reduce friction and difficulties through emotional support. Most importantly, they should work to promote teachers' mental well-being, especially those experiencing frustration, stress, and burnout, serving as a source of emotional support for teachers and developing mechanisms for dealing with classroom conflicts.

## RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This research offers significant contributions to both teachers and educational counselors on both theoretical and practical levels. On the theoretical level, the study provides an opportunity to deeply understand the impact of empathy levels and emotion management among teachers on classroom climate. This contribution can assist educational counselors in mapping the school climate from the perspective of all teachers' emotional competencies. Conversely, this research provides teachers with insights regarding the role of empathy and emotion management in shaping their classroom conduct and helps in understanding their work environment and the level of contribution of the studied variables to how they can function optimally in the classroom to achieve an optimal educational climate.

The research has additional practical contributions, as its findings will be available to counselors as a foundation for developing intervention programs for teacher training and guidance to improve classroom climate. This includes properly managing classroom challenges at both class and individual levels, as an optimal classroom climate provides a good basis for academic achievement. A good educator advocates for an optimal educational climate among their students, which leads to improved teaching quality. The knowledge gained from this research is particularly significant as it represents objective research knowledge derived from primary sources - the teachers themselves - hence the importance of this information.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research examined the relationship between Arab teachers' empathy and emotion management and classroom climate. The findings reinforce the importance of empathy and emotion management as central drivers in creating a supportive and positive classroom climate. Specifically, teachers demonstrating high levels of empathy contribute to greater satisfaction and cohesion among their students, while teachers who successfully manage their emotions help reduce tension and friction in the classroom, enabling students to function better.

Given the research findings, one can conclude that Arab society, being collectivistic, significantly influences classroom climate and teacher conduct. The impact of values such as cooperation and community cohesion emphasizes the importance of empathy and emotion management among teachers as a basis for creating a positive and supportive learning environment.

Although the findings provide a positive picture regarding the relationship between empathy and emotion management, some hypotheses were not fully confirmed, such as the relationship between empathy and competitiveness. These results indicate that classroom competitiveness may be related to additional external factors, such as personal motivation and classroom structure, necessitating further research.

Based on the research conclusions, empathy and emotion management are not just important emotional skills but are essential for educational success, particularly in Arab society where cultural emphases place great importance on interpersonal relationships and mutual support. Understanding local culture and social values can help teachers develop their skills and optimally handle classroom challenges.

Based on these findings, it is important to prioritize the development of training and guidance programs for teachers, focusing on developing empathy and emotion management skills. These programs can include workshops and activities promoting teachers' social and emotional skills, contributing to optimal classroom climate and increased student success. Additionally, learning environments that promote cooperation and mutual understanding among

students should be encouraged, which will also affect their sense of belonging and personal security in the classroom.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational tasks undoubtedly play a central role in improving the quality of the learning process, and the educational counselor has a significant role in this process. Therefore, the counselor must identify teachers' difficulties in emotion management and developing empathy toward their students to enhance their skills. This can be accomplished through counseling and guidance throughout the learning process, with the counselor encouraging teachers to use positive teaching strategies that combine humor, flexibility, and spontaneity, thus making lessons enjoyable and inspiring.

Additionally, it is recommended to develop customized training programs for teachers, including workshops for developing empathy and emotion management, while adapting them to the specific cultural context of Arab society. These workshops can include content on the importance of mutual support, mutual respect, and the ability to create deep emotional connections with students. Teachers should also be encouraged to adopt teaching strategies that invite cooperation rather than competition, to create a learning climate that encourages personal and group success. These training sessions can improve not only teacher welfare but also student achievement, thus contributing to quality and optimal education in classrooms.

It is important that students remain at the center of the learning process, which should interest them and suit their needs and abilities. Students need to feel the empathy that teachers demonstrate toward them, and the educational counselor should monitor the educational and social process to ensure that teachers involve students in the learning process, adapt tasks to students' level of understanding, and review learned material as needed.

Finally, counselors and teachers must act as value agents and promote meaningful emotional and social learning. The counselor should serve as a moral role model and encourage teachers to develop empathetic relationships with their students while strengthening empathetic connections among students themselves. These efforts contribute to fostering a positive classroom climate, leading to improvements in the teaching and learning process, and increasing participation and positive behavior in the classroom.

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