

# STUDENT AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF EMPATHY IN TERTIARY STEM CLASSROOMS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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**SUB-THEME:** Experiential learning

Empathy refers to the ability to share in and understand the thoughts and feelings of others, and consists of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Clark et al., 2019; Cuff et al., 2016; Read, 2019). Teacher empathy – the capacity for teachers to understand, feel, and respond appropriately to students' situations and emotions – plays a key role in the classroom, often acting as a prerequisite to quality teacher-student interactions and enhancing student outcomes and their sense of belonging (Keyser et al., 2022; Mashburn et al., 2008; Meyers et al., 2019).

Prior literature reviews on empathy have predominantly focused on clinical practice, where medical students' empathetic development is required for patient care (Derksen et al., 2013; Jobling & Alberti, 2022). Within education research, only one recent review by Aldrup et al. (2022) examined quantitative studies measuring the association of empathy with student-teacher interactions and student outcomes in tertiary education. Otherwise, reviews on empathy within the education context are lacking, especially within tertiary STEM fields.

In this research, we present the preliminary findings of a systematic literature review regarding student and teacher perceptions of empathy within tertiary STEM education. This review seeks to examine the current state of knowledge of teacher empathy, specifically collating qualitative findings of tertiary students' and teachers' understandings and perceptions of empathy within the STEM learning and teaching experience.

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