

Current Research in Psychology and Behavioral Science (CRPBS)

Volume 1 Issue 4, 2020

Article Information

Received date : September 09, 2020

Published date: September 29, 2020

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Keywords

Empathy; Cognitive empathy; Emotional
empathy

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Empathy as an Important Need in Daily Life

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Abstract

There are many behaviors and emotions that most of us find difficult to demonstrate but always expect others. One of the things that leads to this helplessness is that we do not put ourselves in the other people places. As soon as we take this step, we will see that everyone will be able to get along with each other in an easy way. In order to take this step, we must have some feelings and thoughts. In the top of all these feelings and thoughts there is feeling of empathy. Therefore, this purpose of this paper was first to interpret the term empathy and its types, and try to show the significance of this feeling in daily life. The paper also tried provide some crucial steps that can be followed to learn and built empathy feeling.

Introduction

Being able to understand others, and to feel exactly as others are feeling is almost impossible and not something that each individual possesses easily. Consider one of your close friends lost his father and you went to him for condolence. What you can do is that you will try your best to understand his pain but it is difficult for you to put yourself in his place and feel the same pain that he has. The thing that you can do is to solace him by saying I am sorry for your loss, or you can go further by crying together with him. So, does it mean that when you behave in this way toward your friend you experience the same feelings as him? The answers to this question probably is no. Having ability to put yourself in others places and try to understand. The term “empathy”, which was translated from German psychological term *Einfühlung* that means to “feel in” emerged just about a century ago [1]. English psychologists put forward a small number of other translations for the term empathy including, in “animation,” “play,” “aesthetic sympathy,” and “semblance” [2]. Nevertheless, two psychologists from Cornell and the University of Cambridge in 1908 recommended “empathy” for *Einfühlung*, drawing from the Greek words “em” for “in” and “pathos” for “feeling,” and it fixed [1]. Nonetheless, the concept was originated by *Edward B. Titchener*, who worked under *Wilhelm Wundt* more than a hundred years ago [2].

Empathy and Its Types

The concept empathy has been interpreted differently by many scientists, including psychologists, sociologists, philosophies, etc. *Cuff et al.*, [2] defined the term empathy as a person’s capacity to place, understand, and share the tactility of others, like walking in another person’s shoes. *Lanzoni* [1] has described the term empathy as a personal capacity to put himself in another fellow’s shoes, to understand his attitudes and intentions, to acknowledge his pleasures. Moreover, *Zaki* [3] defined the term as the competence to share, understand, and care about what other individuals are feeling. Empathy is a feeling that resembles an understanding that individuals have varying stages of feelings and understanding each other’s [4]. However, there are several different types of empathy including, cognitive, emotional, and effective. *Cuff et al.*, [2] interpreted the term empathy as the capacity to understand another’s feelings, associated nearly to the theory of mind. Furthermore, *Cuff et al.*, [2] defined the term empathy as a person’s capacity to place, understand, and share the tactility of others, like walking in another person’s shoes. *Lanzoni* [1] has described the term empathy as a personal capacity to put himself in another fellow’s shoes, to understand his attitudes and intentions, to acknowledge his pleasures. Moreover, *Zaki* [3] defined the term as the competence to share, understand, and care about what other individuals are feeling. Empathy is an emotion that resembles an understanding that individuals have varying levels of feelings and understanding others [4]. *Cuff et al.*, [2] on another hand, interpreted the term cognitive empathy as the capacity to understand another’s feelings, associated nearly to the theory of mind. *Selva* [4] cognitive empathy is defined as perspective-taking, which loan itself to the idea of placing yourself in someone else’s shoes.

Furthermore, *Clarke* [5] stated that when a person practices cognitive empathy, he is visualizing what does it mean or what maybe like to really be this person in his situation. Another important type of empathy is emotional empathy. *Cherry* [6] defined the term emotional empathy as the competence to understand others’ feelings and reply properly, which includes concerning for another individual’s well-being, etc. In addition, the definition of the term was divided into three categories [5]. First, feeling same feeling as the other individual. Second, feeling our personal discomfort in replying to other’s pain. Third, feeling compassion against others. *Carpenter* [7] argued that those who can practice emotional empathy easily are more likely willing to help others than those who find it difficult to practice counterparts. Another important type of empathy is somatic empathy, which refers to acting physically in replying to what another person is experiencing [5]. After defining the term and providing it types, we can understand how crucial the value of empathy is and what are the significant roles it plays in our daily life. , which loan itself to the idea of placing yourself in someone else’s shoes. Furthermore, *Clarke* [5] stated that when a person practices cognitive empathy, he is visualizing what it means or what maybe like to really be this person in his situation. Furthermore, *Cherry* [6] defined the term emotional empathy as the competence to understand others’ feelings and reply properly. This includes concern for another individual’s well-being, etc. In addition, the definition of the term was divided into three categories [5]. First, feeling similar emotion as the other person. Second, feeling our personal discomfort in replying to other’s pain. Third, feeling compassion against others. *Carpenter* [7] argued that those who can practice emotional empathy easily are more likely willing to help others than those who find it difficult to practice counterparts. Another important type of empathy is somatic empathy. Which refers to acting physically in replying to what another person is experiencing [5]. After defining the term and providing it types, we can understand how crucial the value of empathy is and what are the significant roles it plays in our daily life.



The Importance of Empathy and its Impacts

Empathy is a metamorphic personality characteristic that positively intensifies all domains of our lives, involving our personal well-being, family life, and work relationships, etc., [8]. *Bourgault* conducted a research on the relationship between empathy and well-being among emergence nurses and found that there is a perfect positive correlation between empathy and well-being [9]. Some religions emphasized the importance of feeling empathy and the role of empathy in their beliefs. For example, in Islam the Prophet *Mohammed* has motivated Muslims to feel empathy for each other, as it is mentioned in Hadith that the believers in their mutual kindness, empathy, and sympathy are just like one body. "If one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever" [10]. In addition, to be a true believer in Islam you are supposed to feel the same thing as your Muslim brother's feels and pray for him, like for him whatever good thing you are asking for yourself. As it is reported in Hadith that "no one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself" [11]. However, Islam did not only call believers to feel empathy for individuals only but for the other animals as well. For instance, *Abu Dawud* reported in a Hadith that one day, while entering a garden, Prophet Mohammed saw a camel that was just skin and bones. At the moments when he saw that camel in that situation he starts crying, then he put his hand on its head until it was comforted. Then he asked the owner of that camel: "Don't you fear Allah about this animal that Allah has given in your ownership? It has complained to me that you keep it hungry and load it heavily which fatigues it" [10]. In addition to Islam, *Lupu* emphasized that in Christianity empathy is accepted to be the core point to understanding who is God, and who Jesus is as well [12].

Moreover, *Aplin* also argued that one of the basic skills for navigating our daily life is empathy [13]. *Cameron et al.* also claimed that empathy frequently motivates altruistic behavior, and empathy-based kindness has been indicated to raise collaboration and forgiveness, strengthen the relationship; and on the other hand, reduce aggression and misjudgment, and what is more important is to boost mental and physical health [13,14]. Society around the world depends on empathy to ease interrelations and forward movement. *Cherry* has classified two advantages of being able to feel empathy [6]. The first benefit is it helps individuals build social relationships. Through understanding what people are thinking and feeling, they are able to act properly in social situations. Second, empathizing with other people aid you learn to manage or balance your personal feelings. Therefore, if the empathy piece is missing in a particular society, that society becomes more detached and less effective in their efficiency and alteration of new ideas [5]. In addition, *Carpenter* argued that empathy is strong stamina that helps people keep social order and collaboration; and it is a required forefather to closeness, certainty, and affiliation [7]. He also claimed that empathic people experience tend to feel happy more than non-empathic people. *Clarke* argued that empathy is a key characteristic that helps in becoming a better parent, teacher, spouse, and friend [5]. After mentioning the significance of empathy, this may lead us to think whether it is something that can be learned or it is something that we are born with.

How to be Empathetic and Build it

Question such as why do some people fail to put themselves in other people's place can be raised here. This question also, leads us to question ourselves whether being an empathic person is something inborn or it can be learned in later in specific time in our lives. This question also leads nature and nurture debate to be occurred. A study have showed that children start to learn or develop empathy feeling at the end of early childhood period [14]. The reason is as they begin to move to from early childhood to middle childhood their thoughts are not still limited to egocentrism. As Jean Piaget mentioned in his cognitive development theory that children in the early childhood stages feeling and thoughts are limited to egocentrism or self-centrism, but at the end of this stage their feelings and behavior start to change [15]. Moreover, at end of early childhood and at the beginning of the middle childhood kids reasoning and ability to feel other people feeling start to develop. Therefore, as the cognitive ability which feeling empathy toward is shaped later in human life, it can be said feeling empathy is more nurture than nature. Therefore, it can be said that it is learned not unlearned thing. So how can we learn to be empathetic. *Brandt* has developed five possible exercise that can be followed to learn to be empathetic [16]. These are: first, think about your important other or a friend, family member, or coworker. Second, what has their mood been like in recent days? Third, what is going on in this person's life that might be making them satisfied or depressed, fearful, or annoyed? Forth, how are you contributing to their live. Fifth, consider what could you do or say to grow those people's situation?

Conclusion

Having ability to put yourself in others shoes and try to understand them is not

something easy and everyone does not own it. Nevertheless, it is a very crucial thing that play a significant role in our daily life, because each of us always wants others to understand us and feel the same as we are feeling in a bad or good situations. In addition, belonging to a religion is also play a very significant role in our live and satisfaction. Based on this, many religions including Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, etc., emphasized the role and the significance of empathy in their beliefs. Moreover, some people may consider that empathy is something inborn and cannot be learned or developed, but luckily and it is the opposite. Studies have proven and provide different steps and exercises that can be followed and practiced to develop feeling of empathy.

Recommendation

Although the term empathy has been coined since a century ago, still there are some who still confuse in using it similar to the term sympathy. However, these two terms are totally different and far from one another. The term empathy as it was described above refers to putting yourself in one shoe and try to feel the same as he is feeling. Therefore, it seems to be stronger than sympathy, which basically refers to feeling sorry for someone but not in a deep way as empathy. In addition, based on the reviewed literature it seem that there is no enough resource and reliable information regarding the term. It has been study by few people and I think it should be study more than it had done. The reason is in our contemporary world it is always need in all field including schools, hospitals, industries, etc. Therefore, each individual who consider himself as a responsible for his environment should do his best to develop this feeling.

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