



Empathic Communication and Emotional Regulation Training for Elementary School Teachers: Fostering a More Supportive Learning Environment at SD Muhammadiyah Blunyah, Yogyakarta

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Keywords: *empathic communication, emotion regulation, elementary school teachers, emotional intelligence, community service program*

Abstract: *In addition to providing academic knowledge, elementary school teachers are also responsible for shaping the character and emotional well-being of students. Therefore, the ability to communicate with empathy and manage emotions is essential to building a classroom atmosphere that feels safe, warm, and supportive. This community engagement program was implemented at SD Muhammadiyah Blunyah, Sleman, Yogyakarta and involved 25 elementary school teachers. The training used a combination of methods, including interactive discussions, small-group activities, analysis of classroom scenarios, role-play, and simple emotion-regulation practices such as breathing pauses and mindfulness grounding. Participating teachers reported clearer self-awareness, improved active listening skills, more consistent use of empathetic language, and practical strategies for addressing daily classroom stressors and behavioral challenges. The qualitative reflections collected after the session indicated a positive shift in teachers' confidence and emotional composure during student interactions. Overall, this program contributes to the development of a more humane and emotionally supportive classroom climate that nurtures students' social-emotional growth. Continued mentoring and follow-up supervision are recommended to ensure that teachers can maintain and deepen these positive changes over time.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Primary school teachers play a central role in shaping the early childhood learning experience. Their job goes far beyond just teaching; They help build students' character, maintain their motivation, and create an emotional atmosphere that feels safe and supportive. When teachers communicate with empathy, students tend to feel more comfortable expressing themselves, asking questions, and participating without fear of being judged. On the other hand, when teachers have trouble managing their own emotions, the class can quickly feel tense or overwhelmed (Candres Abadi1, 2025).

In daily practice, teachers face emotional demands from various directions, such as responding to student behavior, communicating with parents, meeting school expectations, and ensuring classes run smoothly. Research shows that teacher empathy can reduce students' anxiety,

stress, and even depressive tendencies while increasing their engagement in learning (Wiratmo & Mardhiyani, 2021).

Emotional regulation also plays an important role when teachers are unable to manage their feelings, students often become less enthusiastic and less willing to participate. (Kapatan et al., 2024). Local studies also emphasize the importance of strengthening teachers' emotional competence to create a learning environment that feels safe and comfortable (Khoiri et al., 2025). Yet in many classrooms, communication between teachers, students, and parents becomes reactive with a tendency to criticize or blame rather than listen and understand.

Unbalanced communication patterns can interfere with the learning process and affect teachers' emotional well-being. Classroom interactions can become rigid or even intimidating, reducing teaching effectiveness and hindering student development. Empathetic communication and emotion regulation are key components of emotional intelligence that help teachers build healthier relationships. As (Goleman, 2024) explains, Empathetic communication as the ability to understand and respond to the emotions of others without judgment, while emotion regulation refers to managing one's own emotional reactions in a more constructive way. Strengthening these skills can improve students' emotional comfort, reduce conflict, and encourage more active involvement in the classroom.

Strengthening these skills has been shown to enhance students' emotional safety, reduce classroom conflict, and improve engagement. Aysah & Rahmat (2025) It also found that interpersonal communication skills are closely related to a person's ability to regulate emotions. When the teacher masters both, many unpleasant events in the classroom become easier to overcome. Over time, the development of teachers' emotional intelligence supports a more positive, inclusive, and emotionally healthy learning environment.

Taking this into account, this community engagement program is implemented as a preventive effort to strengthen socio-emotional skills among teachers, students, and parents, especially in empathic communication and emotional regulation. The program is designed to help teachers deepen their understanding of emotional intelligence, practice simple strategies they can apply every day, and use these skills consistently in their classrooms. The main goal of this training is to create a healthier emotional climate, support students' holistic development, and improve teachers' mental well-being.

This training involved 25 participants, including teachers and parents from SD Muhammadiyah Blunyah, Sleman. Sessions in this training focused on the challenges of communication, emotion management, and everyday classroom interactions, with participants selected based on their interests and willingness to collaboratively improve the emotional quality of learning.

2. METHOD

This community service program is implemented with a structured yet flexible experiential approach, designed to strengthen teachers' skills in empathic communication and emotion regulation. The activity takes place in three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

2.1. Setting and Participants

The program was held on Friday, August 22, 2025, from 08.00-12.00 at SD Muhammadiyah Blunyah, Sleman, Yogyakarta—a school environment where teachers naturally face daily emotional and interpersonal challenges.

A total of 25 participants joined, including principals, classroom teachers, subject teachers, and several parents interested in improving their communication skills. This combination of participants creates a more dynamic and supportive learning atmosphere.

2.2. Preparation and Planning

The program began with an initial needs assessment, in which the facilitators identified two core socio-emotional competencies that teachers required most:

- (1) empathic communication, and
- (2) emotional regulation.

Based on these competencies, the team developed a training structure, selected interactive activities, and prepared familiar classroom case scenarios. After getting approval from the school, the announcement is shared with teachers and parents. Once the list of participants is determined, the agenda, materials, and logistics are prepared to ensure that the program runs smoothly.

2.3. Training Implementation

The training was delivered in two structured sessions focusing on empathic communication and emotional regulation. A total of 25 elementary school teachers participated in the program, which was conducted at SDN Sukamaju. Participants included classroom teachers, homeroom teachers, and student support staff. The implementation used a combination of short

concept introductions, guided discussions, and practice-based activities to ensure that the material remained relevant to real classroom challenges.

Several interactive methods were applied throughout the program. Teachers engaged in group discussions to identify common emotional and communication issues they encountered daily. Case-based activities were used to analyze typical classroom scenarios, while role-play simulations allowed participants to practice active listening, warm verbal responses, and calmer interaction styles. Emotional regulation strategies were also introduced through breathing pause techniques, cognitive reframing exercises, and brief mindfulness grounding practices, which participants performed individually and in small groups.

Overall, the implementation emphasized hands-on learning, reflection, and real classroom relevance, enabling teachers to directly connect the skills practiced in the sessions with their everyday interactions at school.

2.4. Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach was designed not only to measure knowledge acquisition but also to capture authentic emotional shifts among participants.

(1) Feedback Forms

Teachers reported their satisfaction with the session, the relevance of the materials, and suggestions for improvement. Role-plays and breathing exercises were consistently highlighted as the most impactful components.

(2) Spontaneous Testimonies

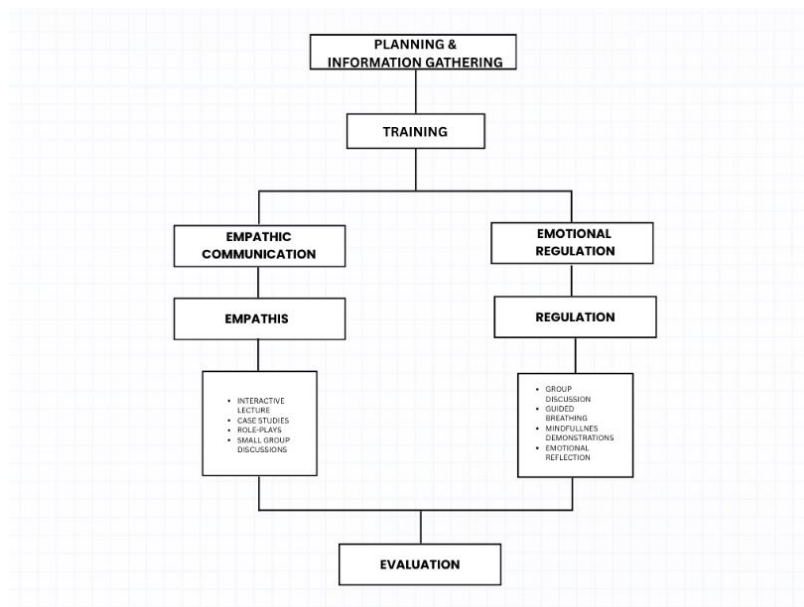
Several participants offered immediate reflections, including:

- feeling calmer after practicing breathing techniques,
- recognizing how often they reacted impulsively,
- appreciating the practical nature of the strategies taught.

These remarks served as genuine evidence of emotional and behavioral learning occurring during the training

Figure 1 illustrates the implementation framework of the empathic communication and emotional regulation training program for elementary school teachers.

Figure 1. The planning process and strategies diagram



3. RESULT

The Empathetic Communication and Emotion Regulation training produced several meaningful outcomes that were gathered from observation notes, participant reflections, group discussions, and written feedback at the end of the session. Overall, the teachers expressed that the activities felt relatable because the scenarios were drawn from situations they face every day in the classroom. To present the results more coherently, the findings are organized into several themes, each introduced with a brief narrative transition and supported by participant testimonials

(1) Increased conceptual understanding

Before discussing the emotional aspects, the first major outcome relates to the teachers' understanding of core concepts introduced during the training. At the end of the session, teachers demonstrated clearer understanding of active listening, I-messages, emotional triggers, and the importance of pausing before reacting. They were also more accurate in distinguishing empathic and non-empathic responses compared to their initial answers.

One teacher shared,

“Saya baru sadar bedanya dengar biasa sama benar-benar mendengarkan dengan hati. Selama ini saya cuma fokus menjawab, bukan memahami.”

Another added,

“Ternyata I-message itu sederhana. Lebih enak disampaikan dan enggak bikin anak merasa disalahkan

(2) Greater awareness of emotional triggers

Beyond conceptual knowledge, the training also encouraged teachers to look inward and identify patterns in their emotional reactions. During the reflection activities, many teachers recognized personal triggers such as noise, fatigue, time pressure, or tension with parents. This insight made them more aware of the need to pause before responding.

One participant admitted,

“Saya mudah emosi ketika capek. Pantas anak-anak ikut tegang.”

(3) Confidence in applying techniques

As the activities progressed, teachers not only understood the material, but they also started applying the techniques with growing confidence.

Through simulations, role-plays, and guided exercises, participants practiced active listening, grounding, breathing techniques, and cognitive reframing. Most of them felt these were simple and doable in daily routines.

A teacher shared,

“Ternyata teknik tarik napas dan berhenti sebentar membuat emosi saya menurun.”

Another commented,

“Teknik grounding itu bikin saya balik fokus. Akan saya gunakan ketika kelas mulai ramai.”

(4) Increased classroom empathy awareness

Another outcome relates to how teachers began seeing student behavior through a more empathic lens. Several teachers mentioned that they no longer viewed misbehavior as rebellion, but as signals of emotional needs or discomfort.

One participant explained,

“Saya biasanya langsung berpikir anak ini sukar dikasihtahu. Sekarang saya ada pertimbangan lain, bisa jadi anak ini minta perhatian.”

Another teacher said,

“Sepertinya saya perlu bertanya dulu, bukan langsung menuduh ke anak.”

(5) Positive participant engagement

The overall atmosphere of the training reflected strong engagement and emotional openness among the teachers. Participants were active in discussions, honest about their struggles, and

enthusiastic during practice sessions. Their written evaluations described the training as refreshing, helpful, and grounding.

One teacher wrote,

“Rasanya plong setelah cerita. Ternyata banyak yang mengalami hal yang sama.”

Another reflected,

“Pelatihan seperti ini harus sering diadakan. Kami jadi ingat kalau guru juga manusia yang punya perasaan.”

4. DISCUSSION

The findings from this training show that when teachers are given space to explore their emotions and practice new communication skills, meaningful changes can begin to emerge. These results reinforce earlier studies indicating that teachers’ emotional competence is closely linked to a more positive classroom atmosphere, calmer interactions, and better student engagement. The discussion below elaborates on how each part of the training contributed to these developments.

(1) Empathic Communication

One of the first shifts observed during the activities was how teachers responded in conversations. Through role-playing and guided scenarios, they experienced for themselves that an empathic response—pausing to listen, acknowledging a child’s feelings, softening the tone—can immediately reduce tension. Several participants mentioned that this approach felt “lebih menenangkan,” both for them and the students. This echoes the findings of Bhuvaneshwara et al. (2025), who emphasized that practical, experience-based training helps teachers internalize empathic communication more naturally.

(2) Emotional awareness

A second theme that emerged was a growing awareness of emotional triggers. As teachers reflected on challenging moments in the classroom, many recognized patterns they had not noticed before such as reacting more sharply when tired or overwhelmed. This awareness became an important turning point, because understanding one’s own emotional patterns is the core of effective emotion regulation. The recognition shared by participants aligns with previous research showing that teachers who can identify their emotional cues are better equipped to respond thoughtfully during classroom stress.

(3) Practical emotion regulation

Simple techniques such as conscious breathing, taking a short pause, or grounding through sensory awareness turned out to be helpful and easy to apply. Several teachers shared that these strategies made them feel “lebih ringan” and more in control during hectic moments. These experiences support the findings of Irmayani et al. (2023), who note that brief, practical exercises are especially effective for teachers because they can be integrated into daily routines without requiring additional time or complex preparation.

(4) Humanistic student perspective

Another meaningful outcome was a shift in how participants viewed student behavior. Instead of immediately labeling misbehavior as resistance, teachers began interpreting it as a sign that something deeper might be happening whether it be anxiety, confusion, or unmet emotional needs. This more humanistic perspective fosters patience and strengthens the relationship between teacher and student. Such a viewpoint is consistent with existing literature emphasizing the importance of empathy and emotional attunement in promoting healthier classroom dynamics.

Overall, discussions during the training, combined with reflective sharing and structured practice, helped teachers connect emotionally with the material. These interactive methods like storytelling, guided reflections, role-play, and emotion regulation exercises not only engaged participants but also nurtured meaningful shifts in mindset. The insights gained suggest that when teachers are supported in developing both communication and emotional skills, they are better equipped to create learning environments that are warm, responsive, and emotionally safe for students.

Picture 1. Group photograph of the facilitators, teachers, and parents participating in the empathic communication and emotional regulation training at SD Muhammadiyah Blunyah, Yogyakarta.



Figure 2. Presentation and knowledge transfer during the empathic communication and emotional regulation training session.



5. CONCLUSION

This community service program shows that strengthening teachers' skills in empathic communication and emotion regulation can truly support their social-emotional development and their ability to build a psychologically safe learning environment. Through a combination of concept exploration, hands-on practice, and reflective activities, this two-session training helps

teachers recognize their emotional triggers, experiment with supportive ways of communication, and try simple but effective strategies such as breath breaks, grounding, mindfulness, and cognitive reframing.

Reflections, observations, and written feedback collected after the training showed that participants not only gained a clearer understanding of why empathy is important in the classroom, but also became more aware of their own emotional habits. Many teachers share that they feel better equipped to stay calm in stressful moments, communicate their needs without blame, and create warmer, more patient interactions with students. These results highlight the importance of social-emotional skills for educators, especially in elementary schools where the emotional climate strongly shapes student engagement and overall well-being.

While this training has yielded encouraging results, ongoing practices are needed to sustain these changes. Additional follow-up sessions, peer-to-peer sharing forums, or ongoing mentoring can help teachers to continue to implement these strategies consistently in their daily routines. Overall, the program reinforces the value of integrating emotional intelligence training into teacher professional development to support a learning environment that is not only effective, but also compassionate, and human-centered.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author extends sincere appreciation to the teachers, parents, and students of SD Muhammadiyah Blunyah, Yogyakarta, whose active participation enabled the smooth implementation of this program. Special thanks are also conveyed to the Principal, Mr. Yudi Wardana, for providing full support and facilitation throughout the activities.

Acknowledgment is further given to the facilitators and resource persons who contributed their expertise in empathetic communication and emotion regulation, as well as the school administration for preparing the facilities needed during the training.

Finally, the author gratefully recognizes the constructive input from colleagues and mentors, which contributed to the development and completion of this program.

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