

THE *EMPASSION* SCALE: INTRODUCTION, VALIDATION, AND APPLICATION*

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Summary. Herein, a new *Empassion* concept is introduced, followed by validation and a cross-segment comparative study. This concept argues that empathy and compassion, the key factors in both successful business and a harmonious life, should appear together, as empathy without compassion may lead to negative results (e.g., it may be used for manipulative behaviors), while compassion without empathy may lead to uninformed mercy. This article reviews the current knowledge on empathy and compassion, as well as methods for measuring them. In the beyond the state-of-the-art section, this article presents a novel idea of blending empathy and compassion into one phenomenon called *Empassion*. It explores the hypothetical components of *Empassion* and demonstrates the process leading to the construction of the *Empassion* Scale (ES), its validation process, and a cross-segment comparative study. The sample comprised adult Poles ($N = 338$), reached through the research panel Ariadna. Combining empathy and compassion into a single comprehensive phenomenon and related scale significantly advances psychological theory by grouping the positive and avoiding the negative aspects of each category separately. The results of the validation process of the new ES are also presented: Reliability proved to be very good. Factor analysis supported the two-factors hypothesis: Tuning in with understanding and

* **Acknowledgements.** Thank you to Paige Munnik for her significant editorial contribution. This article is assigned to the Robert B. Zajonc Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw.

Declarations

Funding: This research did not receive any specific grant from any funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares that there were no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship or the publication of this article.

Ethics Statement: Data collection of this study was reviewed and accepted by the Research Ethics Committee, Institute for Social Science, University of Warsaw.

Data Availability: The data for this study are available from the author upon request.

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engagement. Cross-section comparative analysis found various dependencies, e.g., women having significantly higher level of Empassion than men. A validity study documented significant ES correlations with the empathy and compassion scales.
Key words: empathy, compassion, conflict prevention, changemaking, Empassion

Introduction: Empathy and Compassion

It was Aristotle (4th century BC) who proposed the term *philia* as the relationship between people who feel *philēesis* (mutual understanding) for one another. In Aristotle's understanding, *philēesis* is a deep desire for the *eudaimonia* of another person—most closely explained as empathy and compassion (Curzer, 2007; Barnes, 2014).

In the Middle Ages, Augustine (5th century AC) argued that compassion is the ability to feel another's misery, which encourages us to provide support (Ruys, 2018). Some authors claim that in the Middle Ages, compassion and empathy played a significant role, despite not yet having been named or fully discovered (e.g., Morrison, 2013).

At the beginning of the 20th century, John Dewey considered community and civil society as the social core, highlighting mutual care and understanding, which today is apparently perceived as social compassion and empathy (Dewey, 1966).

Compassion has always been present in religious teachings, and—together with empathy—is a fulcrum for positive social relationships (Davis, 2017).

Empathy

At the beginning of the 20th century, German psychologist Theodor Lipps introduced the term *Einfühlung* (German: "feeling with"), referring to the tendency of perceivers to project themselves into the objects of perception and experience themselves as being "in" the object (Lipps, 1903; Håkansson, 2003; Praszkie, 2014).

The term empathy per se was coined by American psychologist Edward Bradford Titchener during the process of developing Lipp's concept (Titchener, 1909).

The empathy concept for humans is essential in many fields, e.g., social and personality psychology, neuroscience, and clinical psychology (Hall, Schwartz, 2017). However, in the literature, multiple denotations of this concept are available, e.g., Cuff et al. identified 43 definitions (2014, pp. 3–4).

Here, empathy is defined as the proficiency to understand or feel what another person is experiencing, from their point of view; in other words, it is the ability to place oneself in another person's shoes (Lazarus, 1994; Davis, 2006; Barnett, Mann, 2013; Praszkie, 2014; Breyer, 2020).

There are two basic dimensions of empathy (Cuff et al., 2014; Read, 2019): affective, i.e., emotionally tuning into the feelings of others (Batson et al., 2005; Decety, Lamm, 2006; Eisenberg, Strayer, 1987; Hein, Singer, 2008; Roy, 2010), and cognitive,

i.e., the ability to understand another (Mead, 1967; Ickes, 1997; De Vignemont, Singer, 2006; Piaget, 2008; van der Weele, 2011). Some definitions, however, include both (Cohen, Strayer, 1996; Batson et al., 2005; Eisenberg, Fabes, Spinrad, 2006; Decety, Moriguchi, 2007; Oliveira-Silva, Gonçalves, 2011).

Compassion

There is indication that compassion has been prevalent among animals, especially humanoids, as since prehistoric times (Hublin, 2009).

In contemporary times, compassion directly addresses caring for others. It is defined as the capacity for being moved by the suffering of others and wanting to help alleviate it (Norris, 2013). In common understanding, compassion is the desire to alleviate another's suffering (Moreno-Jiménez, Demerouti, Blanco-Donoso, 2022).

Compassion evolved as a function facilitating cooperation, as well to protect the weak and those suffering. As such, it shapes moral judgment and action (Goetz, Keltner, Simon-Thomas, 2010) in organizations and businesses, as experiencing compassion in times of suffering helps employees resume or reengage with their work (Lilius et al., 2013).

Empathy and Compassion in Changemaking

Empathy requires imagining the role of another (Håkansson, 2003), and as such, is perceived as one of the core drivers of changemaking (Gerdes, Segal, 2011; van Kirk, 2016; Raber, 2018), especially in the field of clinical psychology (e.g., Ickes, 2009).

Compassion is seen as a cardinal component in various areas of diverse human activities (e.g., Davis, 2017), including social entrepreneurship (Grimes et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2012), medicine (e.g., Taylor, 1997; Straughair, 2019), and management (Koopmans, 2018).

Measuring Empathy and Compassion

Measuring Empathy. There have been several studies measuring empathy, dating back as far as the 1940s (Dymond, 1949). A questionnaire developed for social workers, rooted in social cognitive neuroscience and developmental psychology, was introduced as the Empathy Assessment Index (EAI; Gerdes, Segal, 2011). In clinical psychology, there are several instruments available for measuring empathy (Ilgunaite, Giromini, Di Girolamo, 2017). One of the most popular assessment tools is the Empathy Quotient, introduced for individuals with ASD (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, 2004). This article follows on from its concise version, i.e., the Empathy Quotient Short Questionnaire (22 items), which has good psychometric properties (Wakabayashi et al., 2006).

Measuring Compassion. A study analyzing the existing compassion assessment tools identified an unmet need for a psychometrically validated instrument that comprehensively measures the construct of compassion (Sinclair et al., 2017).

This need seems to have been currently met by the recently published Compassion Scale (16 items), which was verified on an $N = 465$ sample, demonstrating good psychometric properties (Pommier, Neff, Tóth-Király, 2020). Therefore, the Compassion Scale was further used in this article.

Empassion: Merging Empathy with Compassion

On the one hand, empathy is commonly seen as a prosocial and morally positive factor; however, it may also serve as a tool for pursuing negative acts, e.g., through narcissistic or manipulative use of the deepened knowledge of another (Konrath et al., 2014; Breithaupt, 2018). It may especially relate to persons with a psychopathic personality (Hart, 2020; van Dongen, 2020).

This indicates that empathy per se is not enough to assure caring relationships. The complementary parameter should hence relate to sympathizing with others, i.e., having a high compassion level.

Similarly, compassion per se may be blind without understanding the real needs of another and may even turn out to be dangerous (Wel, 2020)—and as such, is seen in some cases as “idiotic compassion” (e.g., McCaffrey, 2015).

The conjecture is that if empathy does not guarantee positive action, and if compassion without empathy may lead to action unrelated to real needs, there emerges a need for a blended phenomenon: *Empassion*. Recent neuroscience research posits that merging compassion with empathy may be considered a predictor of individuals’ pro-social behavior (Chierchia, Singer, 2017; Stevens, Woodruff, 2018; Stevens, Taber, 2021).

This would require adapting the two scales into a joint one. This *Empassion Scale* (ES) could then measure the propensity for feeling and understanding others, as well as for caring for them and sympathizing with their problems.

Combining empathy and compassion into one phenomenon and scale provides a comprehensive psychological category allowing to group all of the positive and avoid all of the negative aspects of each category occurring separately.

Research Goals and Hypotheses

The goal of the present study was to validate the new *Empassion Scale* and verify its validity in comparison to the Empathy Quotient Short and Compassion Scale. Moreover, it aimed to compare the level of *Empassion* among various segments of the sample.

The main hypothesis is that the new ES Scale will have good psychometric properties, and that its correlation with the Empathy Quotient Short and Compassion

Scale will document its validity. A further conjecture is that the Empassion level will be higher in females than males, as well as higher among those with leadership, social activity, and innovativeness experience than those without these experiences.

Measuring Empassion

The inspiration for building a new scale that merges empathy and compassion came from the aforementioned Empathy Quotient Short Questionnaire and Compassion Scale. The 16 initial items for the Empassion Scale were developed from scratch, though inspired by these two existing scales.

Constructing the Empassion Scale (ES)

The conjecture is that there are two primary categories for Empassion: Tuning in with understanding and Engagement. The first is hypothetically broken down into Understanding and Tuning in, while the latter is divided into Emotional engagement and caring for others (see Table 1).

Table 1. Categories, sub-categories, and items for the Empassion Scale

Categories	Subcategories	Items
1	Under- standing	Other people confide in me—as they say, I am very understanding.
2		I spot when people don't say that they are experiencing problems.
3		From what I hear, people think that I am good at understanding their feelings and way of thinking.
4		I immediately notice if someone in a social situation feels uncomfortable.
5		I notice right away if somebody wants to say something.
6		I am convinced that everybody has weaknesses.
7	Tuning in	It is easy for me to tune in to someone else.
8		I can tune in to the emotions of another person.
9		I can sense when someone is hiding their emotions.

cont. Table 1

Categories	Subcategories	Items
10		I emotionally engage with the problems of others.
11	Emotional engagement	I like to listen when people talk about their problems.
12		I am concerned when I see people experiencing problems.
13		I pay careful attention when others confide in me with their problems
14	Caring for others	When I see that someone is having a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person.
15		People differ, though they all share the same way of experiencing the feeling of pain.
16		I try to comfort people who are sad.

Results 1.

Validation of the Empassion Scale

The items mentioned in Table 1 were randomized: four were reversed and four additional buffer items were added.

The Sample. This study was conducted on an $N = 338$ sample of Polish society, comprising 203 women (60.1%) and 135 men (39.9%); 113 subjects with a leadership role (33.4%) and 225 without (66.6%); 121 subjects involved in a social project (35.8.0%) and 217 not (64.2%); 106 subjects who perceived themselves as innovators (31.4%) and 232 that did not (68.6%).

For age and education, see Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Age distribution

Age (years)	#	%
18–24	25	7.4
25–34	78	23.1
35–44	96	28.4
45–54	54	16.0
Over 55	85	25.1
Total	338	100.0

Table 3. Education level

Education level	#	%
Primary or some high school	31	9.2
High school or equivalent	123	36.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	184	54.5
Total	338	100

Reliability. After removing the buffer items, the analysis showed that the overall reliability of the 16-item ES was very good: The scale's Cronbach's $\alpha = .891$. Table 4 demonstrates the psychometric properties: Cronbach's α for all items was $> .8$. Moreover, all items, except the four reversed items, correlated with the entire scale between the average and high levels.

Table 4. Psychometric properties of the ES

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α	Correlation with the entire scale
Empassion Scale (ES)	58.78	8.43	.891	
1 I emotionally engage with the problems of others.	3.583	.844	.883	.593
2 I pay careful attention when others confide in me with their problems	3.941	.787	.879	.706
3 I immediately notice if someone in a social situation feels uncomfortable.	3.754	.760	.883	.589
4 I don't like to listen when people talk about their problems.*	3.379	1.015	.888	-.479
5 Other people confide in me—as they say, I am very understanding.	3.675	.851	.881	.648
6 I don't notice when someone wants to say something and is silent.*	3.216	.997	.895	-.321
7 I avoid people who are sad.*	3.328	1.031	.893	-.376
8 When I see that someone is having a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person.	3.846	.735	.879	.714

cont. Table 4

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α	Correlation with the entire scale
9 People differ, though they all share the same way of experiencing the feeling of pain.	3.749	.829	.886	.517
10 I spot when people don't say that they are experiencing problems.	3.675	.763	.884	.582
11 It is easy for me to tune in to someone else.	3.654	.809	.884	.577
12 Only weaklings have weaknesses.*	3.962	1.074	.895	-.337
13 From what I hear, people think that I am good at understanding their feelings and way of thinking.	3.701	.764	.881	.646
14 I can tune in to the emotions of another person.	3.828	.759	.881	.667
15 I can sense when someone is hiding their emotions.	3.675	.771	.882	.629
16 I am concerned when I see people experiencing problems.	3.820	.766	.880	.689

* Reversed.

Factor Analysis. To verify the validity of the questionnaire, factor analysis using the 16 variables of the Empassion scale was conducted. Principal component analysis (PSA) was applied, and a varimax rotation was conducted. The factor analysis method was justified since the Kaiser–Mayer–Olkin test on the standardized data showed a KMO of .92. Additionally, the Bartlett's test of sphericity was found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2(190) = 3415.689; p < .001$). Three factors were identified, explaining 64% of the variance (Table 5).

The significant loadings are shown in bold. This distribution indicates that Factor 1 represents the "Tuning in with understanding" category, while Factor 2 the "Engagement" category (see Table 1). Factor 3 consists solely of reversed items, encompassing all four of them; if reversed back, these four items would also fit the conjected distribution (Table 1).

The reliability of these two factors measured separately turned out to be very high: For Tuning in with understanding, Cronbach's *alpha* was .817, and for Engagement, it was .805 (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 5. Factor analysis: Matrix of the rotated loadings, by varimax rotation

	Items	Communa- lities (h^2)	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Percentage of variance explained		27%	20%	17%
1	I emotionally engage with the problems of others.	65%	.36	.72	.02
2	I pay careful attention when others confide in me with their problems.	66%	.39	.67	-.23
3	I immediately notice if someone in a social situation feels uncomfortable.	63%	.77	.18	-.09
4	I don't like to listen when people talk about their problems.*	74%	-.04	-.25	.82
5	Other people confide in me—as they say, I am very understanding.	61%	.66	.41	-.07
6	I don't notice when someone wants to say something and is silent.*	68%	-.20	.15	.79
7	I avoid people who are sad.*	71%	.10	-.27	.79
8	When I see that someone is having a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person.	69%	.38	.71	-.23
9	People differ, though they all share the same way of experiencing the feeling of pain.	41%	.45	.45	-.04
10	I spot when people don't say that they are experiencing problems.	64%	.74	.31	.05
11	It is easy for me to tune in to someone else.	50%	.56	.44	-.02
12	Only weaklings have weaknesses.*	67%	-.04	-.04	.82
13	From what I hear, people think that I am good at understanding their feelings and way of thinking.	64%	.73	.32	-.08
14	I can tune in to the emotions of another person.	62%	.63	.47	-.08
15	I can sense when someone is hiding their emotions.	68%	.79	.22	-.07
16	I am concerned when I see people experiencing problems.	71%	.36	.75	-.14

* Reversed.

Table 6. Reliability of the Tuning in with understanding factor

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α	Correlation with the entire scale
Tuning in with understanding	33.139	4.852	.817	
3 I immediately notice if someone in a social situation feels uncomfortable.	3.754	.760	.787	.630
5 Other people confide in me—as they say, I am very understanding.	3.675	.851	.785	.628
6 I don't notice when someone wants to say something and is silent.*	3.216	.997	.836	-.253
10 I spot when people don't say that they are experiencing problems.	3.675	.763	.789	.611
11 It is easy for me to tune in to someone else.	3.654	.809	.793	.564
12 Only weaklings have weaknesses.*	3.962	1.074	.846	-.206
13 From what I hear, people think that I am good at understanding their feelings and way of thinking.	3.701	.764	.782	.666
14 I can tune in to the emotions of another person.	3.828	.759	.783	.665
15 I can sense when someone is hiding their emotions.	3.675	.771	.782	.670

* Reversed.

Table 7. Reliability of the Engagement factor

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α	Correlation with the entire scale
Engagement	25.645	4.118	.806	
1 I emotionally engage with the problems of others.	3.583	.844	.780	.543
2 I pay careful attention when others confide in me with their problems	3.941	.787	.760	.668
4 I don't like to listen when people talk about their problems.*	3.379	1.015	.794	-.486

cont. Table 7

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's α	Correlation with the entire scale
7 I avoid people who are sad.*	3.328	1.031	.809	-.413
8 When I see that someone is having a difficult time, I try to be caring toward that person.	3.846	.735	.760	.681
9 People differ, though they all share the same way of experiencing the feeling of pain.	3.749	.829	.799	.428
16 I am concerned when I see people experiencing problems.	3.820	.766	.761	.668

* Reversed.

Results 2.

Cross-Segment Comparative Analysis

In order to explore the Empassion level in various populations, cross-segment comparative analysis was applied. There was a significant difference in the level of Empassion in all tested groups:

Gender. Empassion in the female group ($N_f = 203$) was 60.8; meanwhile, in the male group ($N_m = 135$), it was significantly lower: 55.8; $t(336) = 5.58$; $p = .0000$.

Leadership Experience. The Empassion level of those who had leadership experience ($N_L = 113$) differed significantly from those who did not ($N_{-L} = 225$). In the "No" group Empassion was 5.6, while in the "Yes" group, it was 61.2; $t(336) = 3.82$; $p = .0002$.

Social Activity. Those involved in social activities ($N_S = 121$) demonstrated a significantly different empathy level than those who were not ($N_{-S} = 217$): The "No" group's empathy level was 57.73, whereas the "Yes" group's was 60.68; $t(336) = 3.13$; $p = .0019$.

Being an Innovator. Empassion of the innovators ($N_I = 106$) significantly differed to that of the non-innovators ($N_{-I} = 232$): 60.60 vs. 57.95, respectively; $t(336) = 2.71$; $p = .0071$.

Results 3.

Validity: Correlation with Empathy Quotient Short and Compassion Scale

To verify the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between Empassion and empathy, the Pearson's r (PCC) test was performed, which documented that this correlation was significant (see Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8. Empassion correlation with empathy, coefficients in the entire sample

	Empassion	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Empathy	.768	< .0005

The correlation coefficient: $r(336) = .77; p = .000$.

Similarly, to verify the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between empathy and compassion, the Pearson’s *r* test was performed, which documented that this correlation was significant (see Table 8).

Table 9. Empassion correlation with compassion, coefficients in the entire sample

	Empassion	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Compassion	.833	< .0005

The correlation coefficient: $r(336) = .83; p = .000$.

This PCC analysis confirmed the validity of the Empassion Scale (ES), documenting that there was a highly significant correlation between ES and both scales: Measuring empathy and compassion.

Conclusions

This study supported the concept of creating a new method of social analysis, i.e., the Empassion Scale, which proved to have good psychometric properties, being ready to use in further psychological studies.

The theoretical analysis supported the claim that the Empassion phenomenon has a significant meaning in the psychology and social arena and is worth developing as a separate theoretical category, as well as a way of measuring.

This fills the gap, as in various fields of psychology, studies and education are usually conducted separately for empathy and compassion. For example, in business, empathy (e.g., Cohen, 2012; Holt et al., 2017) is detached from compassion (Bejou, 2011; Solomon, 2015), while in healthcare, the approach to empathy (e.g., Sanchez et al., 2019; Moudatsou et al., 2020) is separate and unrelated to compassion (e.g., Youngson, 2011; de Zulueta, 2013; Hojat et al., 2013, 2018). Similarly, in family studies, empathy (Miklikowska, Duriez, Soenens, 2011; Yoo, Feng, Day, 2013) is disconnected from compassion (Park, Ackerman, 2011; Kirby, 2016). This study paves the way for perceiving empathy and compassion as a single positive phenomenon: Empassion, without isolated empathy and compassion doubts.

This study fully supported the conjecture that the Empassion Scale has very good psychometric properties and is significantly correlated with empathy and

compassion scales. As such, it is a valuable tool to measure the level of blended empathy and compassion. Moreover, it documented that females scored significantly higher on Empassion than males, similarly to people socially involved, with people who are leaders and innovators having a higher Empassion level than those who are not.

Future studies should confirm the Empassion Scale's psychometric properties in different (e.g., Great Britain and the USA) and larger samples, using similar and complementary alternative analytic methods.

Empassion may be used as a gateway for training young leaders, as well as caregivers. The ES may help to evaluate training results or to recruit staff.

Training

It is important to add that Empassion is trainable and can be trained and ingrained, especially among youth and future social and business leaders (Chierchia, Singer, 2017; Marsh, 2018). Moreover, leaders can foster conditions that facilitate empathy and compassion (Lilius et al., 2013). The ES may help in appraising the training results.

Conflict Prevention

Empathy is one of the pivotal concepts (together with trust and dialogue) contributing to conflict prevention (Head, 2012). Similarly, compassion and its training could reduce intergroup conflict (Branje, Meeus, 2006; Klimecki, 2019). The blended Empassion Scale may be key to selecting and evaluating peacemakers and peacebuilders in conflicted areas.

Empassion as a Key to Prosocial Behavior: Example of Implementation

The following example demonstrates how Empassion is involved in ingraining prosocial attitudes and behavior:

Mary Gordon,² based in Canada, is eradicating aggression from schools through bringing neighborhood babies into the classroom in a cycle of "empathy lessons." She realized that a lack of empathy is at the heart of the growing aggression in primary schools, and thus initiated a way to augment empathy and compassion through introducing classes in which students relate with babies and their mothers into the curriculum. In this vein, she developed the program Roots of Empathy (Gordon, 2005). Longitudinal research, in which classes participating in ROE were matched with similar classes that were not, has shown that children who participated in the program demonstrated, a few years later, decreased

² See: <https://rootsofempathy.org/>. Accessed 30 April 2023.

aggression and increased prosocial behavior (e.g., sharing, helping, and including) as compared to those who did not (Santos et al., 2011; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012).

As such, the Roots of Empathy program has been adapted and is spreading throughout Canadian schools, as well as across some European countries.

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SKALA „EMPASSION”: WPROWADZENIE, WALIDACJA I ZASTOSOWANIE

Streszczenie. W tym artykule zaproponowane jest nowe pojęcie „Empassion”, a także metoda jego pomiaru, walidacja kwestionariusza oraz badania międzysegmentowe.

Empatia i współczucie, kluczowe czynniki zarówno w biznesie, jak i w życiu osobistym, powinny występować razem, bowiem empatia bez współczucia może prowadzić do negatywnych rezultatów (np. może być używana do zachowań manipulacyjnych), natomiast współczucie bez empatii może prowadzić do litości niepopartej rozumieniem.

Artykuł przedstawia przegląd współczesnej wiedzy o empatii i współczuciu oraz o metodach pomiaru tych zmiennych, a następnie prezentuje koncepcję własną „empassion”; proponuje też zmienne tworzące to pojęcie, a następnie przedstawia metodę konstruowania Skali Empassion (ES), proces jej walidacji oraz międzysegmentowe badania występowalności tej cechy na próbie dorosłych Polaków, $N = 338$ (poprzez panel badawczy Ariadna). Rzetelność skali okazała się bardzo dobra, a analiza czynnikowa potwierdziła zasadność dwóch zmiennych empassion: „dostrajania się do drugiej osoby” oraz „zaangażowania”. Badanie międzysegmentowe ujawniło występowanie różnych zależności, np. kobiety mają znacząco wyższy poziom empassion niż mężczyźni. Analiza trafności pokazała pozytywną korelację skali ES z obiema skalami: empatii i współczucia. Połączenie empatii ze współczuciem w jednej kategorii oraz skali umożliwia połączenie pozytywnych oraz unikanie negatywnych aspektów każdej z tych kategorii oddzielnie.

Słowa kluczowe: empatia, współczucie, zapobieganie konfliktom, wprowadzanie zmiany, empassion

Receipt Date: 22th November 2022

Receipt Date after correction: 17th February 2023

Print Acceptance Date: 20th February 2023