

Response to reviewer-1

- Changed title to include “A Cross-Sectional Study of...”
- Consider including type of study design in the title: “A Cross-sectional Study of Empathy Among College Students in Helping Profession Degree Programs”. The study design is included in abstract, so STROBE guidelines met. **Completed.**
- Study design not identified in methods. **Completed. (see Data Collection section)**
- Biases not mentioned or addressed. Author should address biases. **Please see “Limitations” section.**
- Missingness in data not mentioned. All respondents answered all questions completely? **Revised Participants section to include number of surveys excluded from the study due to missing data.**
- Number of participants in study should be compared to number of students in programs. Did 100% of students in each program participate? If not, there may be differences in program participation indicating potential bias. **Comment added under Limitations to discuss underrepresentation of certain degrees.**
- Page 4, background on IRI can be more concise. **I moved the IRI info and revised it to be more concise within the Methods section.**
- Page 5, background on previous research can be more concise to highlight findings. **This section should appear more concise now that I have moved the IRI content and revised it some.**

Response to reviewer-2

Helping professions is used in the actual survey, but I revised the beginning sentence of the manuscript to note health and human sciences are also “helping professions”

I briefly added some specific outcomes from a recent meta-analysis on

empathy outcomes in healthcare research. The caring behavior is linked to having empathy. Having empathy helps them be caring in their interactions (empathic interactions) toward those better outcomes.

Interesting article! I like how this paper concludes with the encouragement to introduce empathy into the curriculum early on in a student’s educational experience, and how this can be achieved. I’m interested in more of the “why”. Why this study? The case for improved patient care outcomes, I’m certain is valid, but it wasn’t presented clearly and directly in the paper. **The risk of low empathy among students**

I also wonder if there are more differences in the groups surveyed, as all students in the programs mentioned may not be interested in/or become direct patient care “helpers”. **There could be some students more interested in management positions in healthcare (for example). Yet these degree programs are all intended to serve people in some form.**

Any look at online vs seated learning and teaching empathy? Interesting question for future research.

Any correlation to reported faith? Interesting question for future research.