

Dear Editor and Reviewers,

Thank you for your thoughtful and constructive feedback on our manuscript. We appreciate the opportunity to revise the article. We have carefully considered each recommendation and believe the revisions have strengthened the manuscript. Our responses to each reviewer comment are provided below.

Reviewer 1

Comment: The title should include information about the methodology or research design to identify the manuscript as a data-driven article.

Response: Thank you for this suggestion. We revised the title to explicitly identify the research design. The revised title is *Social Media Use and Empathy Among College Students: A Cross-Sectional Study*.

Comment: Please indicate whether the Social Media Use measure was created by the authors and how many items it contains.

Response: We expanded the Measures section to clarify that social media use was assessed using eight researcher-developed self-report items created for the present study. We also added a description of the domains assessed by these items and provided additional detail regarding the measurement and coding of social media interaction style.

Comment: Please identify the author(s) of the Basic Empathy Scale in the Measures section.

Response: We revised the Measures section to identify the Basic Empathy Scale as the 20-item measure developed by Jolliffe and Farrington (2006). The original scale-development article has also been added to the reference list.

Comment: The Results section would benefit from one or two data tables, including descriptive statistics and regression results.

Response: We added two tables to the Results section. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for total, cognitive, and affective empathy. Table 2 presents the multiple regression results predicting affective empathy, including unstandardized and standardized coefficients, standard errors, test statistics, significance levels, and overall model statistics.

Comment: The manuscript contains relatively few recent sources. Consider adding current literature concerning the broader impacts of social media on younger generations, beyond empathy.

Response: We expanded the Literature Review to incorporate additional recent research published between 2023 and 2025. This includes recent evidence concerning psychological well-being and passive social media engagement among college students, a contemporary meta-analysis examining active and passive social media use, and research involving college students examining active/passive engagement and interpersonal communication capacities, including empathy. These additions provide broader contemporary context while further developing the rationale for examining patterns of social media engagement among college students.

Reviewer 2

Comment: No abstract was included in the submitted manuscript. An abstract summarizing the purpose, sample, methods, key findings, and implications should be added.

Response: An abstract has been added that summarizes the study purpose, sample, methodology, primary statistical findings, and implications. The abstract also distinguishes the significant regression findings from the trend-level ANOVA findings and avoids causal interpretation of the cross-sectional findings.

Comment: Minor typographical and spacing errors appear in the manuscript and reference list and should be corrected.

Response: We carefully reviewed the manuscript and reference list and corrected typographical, spacing, capitalization, punctuation, and reference-formatting inconsistencies.

Comment: Additional recent studies specifically involving college-student or emerging-adult samples would strengthen the literature base.

Response: We expanded the literature review to include additional recent studies involving college and university students, as well as a recent meta-analysis examining active and passive social media use. These additions include research addressing passive social media use and psychological well-being and research examining active versus passive social media use, communication capacity, and empathy among college students. The corresponding references have been added to the reference list.

Comment: The omnibus ANOVA for affective empathy across interaction groups was only trend-level ($p = .082$), so framing this as a central finding should be tempered in the abstract and Discussion.

Response: We appreciate this observation and revised the manuscript to distinguish more clearly between the trend-level omnibus ANOVA and the statistically significant regression findings. The Results section continues to identify the ANOVA finding as trend-level. The abstract, Discussion, and conclusion now specifically attribute the significant association between social media interaction style and affective empathy to the regression analysis. Language describing the findings has also been tempered to emphasize associations rather than causal relationships.

Comment: The sample was drawn from a single university and was approximately 80% female, limiting generalizability.

Response: We agree with this limitation. The Discussion explicitly acknowledges that the sample was drawn from a single university and was predominantly female, which may limit generalizability. We also note that the small number of participants identifying outside binary gender categories prevented examination of differences across a broader range of gender identities and recommend larger and more diverse samples in future research.

Comment: Minor formatting and spacing errors in the reference list should be corrected.

Response: The reference list was reviewed and formatting and spacing inconsistencies were corrected. Newly incorporated sources were also formatted and added to the reference list.

Thank you again for your careful review and constructive recommendations. We believe these revisions have improved the clarity, methodological transparency, contemporary literature base, and interpretation of the manuscript.