

# The Influence of Dietary-Related Social Media Content on College Students

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## ABSTRACT

Social media is one of the most influential platforms in college students' lives (Woods et al., 2019). It is also one of the leading platforms where people share recipes, pictures of meals, and nutritional information. Therefore, it is vital to investigate the effects of social media and its potential to impact college students' diets. Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained to collect data from human subjects. A descriptive, exploratory study was conducted at Alabama A & M (AAMU) University to determine the influence of dietary-related social media content on college students. The students were recruited to complete a questionnaire by sending a one-time invitation via email, blackboard, Facebook, and Instagram. A Statistical Package for the Social Sciences system (SPSS) was used to analyze the research data's probabilities. A study showed a positive correlation between the amount of time spent on social media and college students' eating habits. This study demonstrates social media capabilities to be used as sources of information for college students to make decisions regarding their healthy dietary practices.

## INTRODUCTION

Eating habits have profound consequences; it is essential to understand which factors influence them and how. A factor that possibly affects eating attitudes is social media use. Food is one of the most common topics posted on social media platforms, from posting recipes to reading elaborate articles about trendy foods. One study noted that individuals had more awareness of their daily eating habits and had become more interested in consuming nutritious meals when social media interaction was present (Watanabe et al., 2017.)

## OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To determine the impact of social media frequency use on the college students' willingness to try new foods and recipes.
- ❖ To examine if college students are influenced to try new recipes/foods from social media.
- ❖ To assess the male vs. female influence to try new foods/recipes from social media accounts.
- ❖ To assess the top social media sites used by college students.

## METHODS

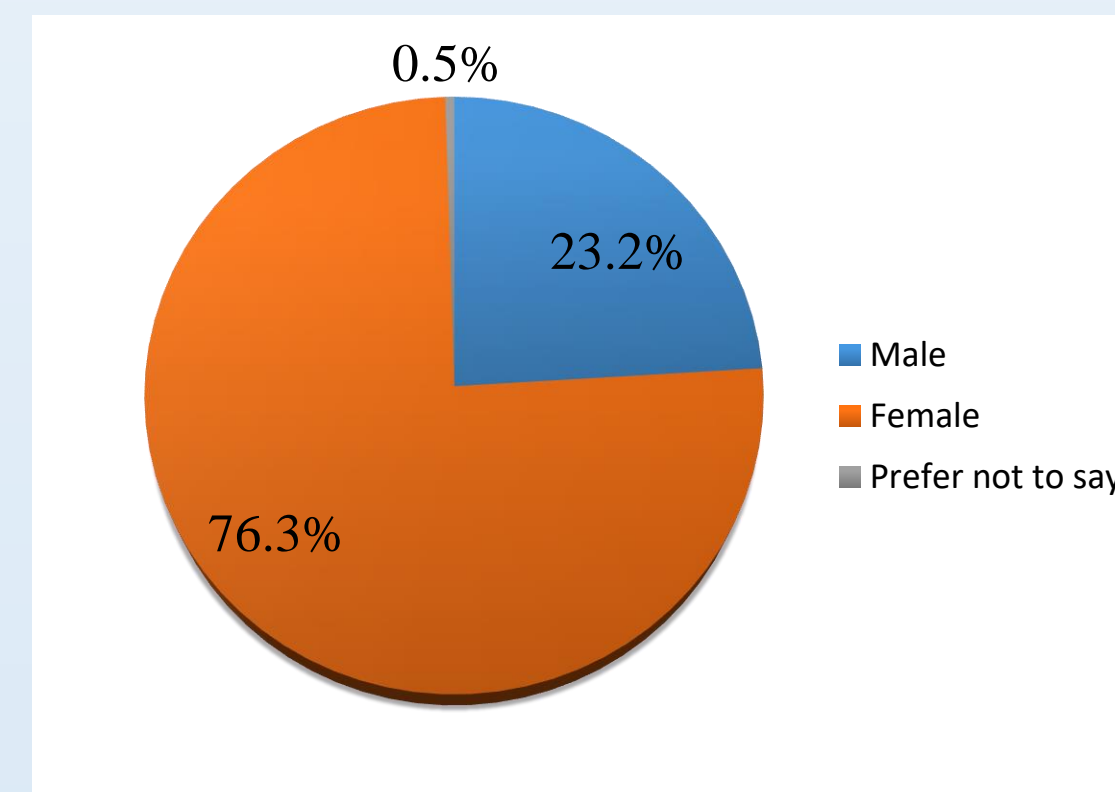
Cross-sectional study (n=208) was used to evaluate the influence of social media and dietary habits among college students at Alabama A& M university. Surveys to examine student's social media use and dietary habits were routinely completed by Alabama A&M students. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences system (IBM SPSS 27) was used to analyze the research data's probabilities. Statistically, T-test was used to test the responses from the questionnaire in this study.

## RESULTS

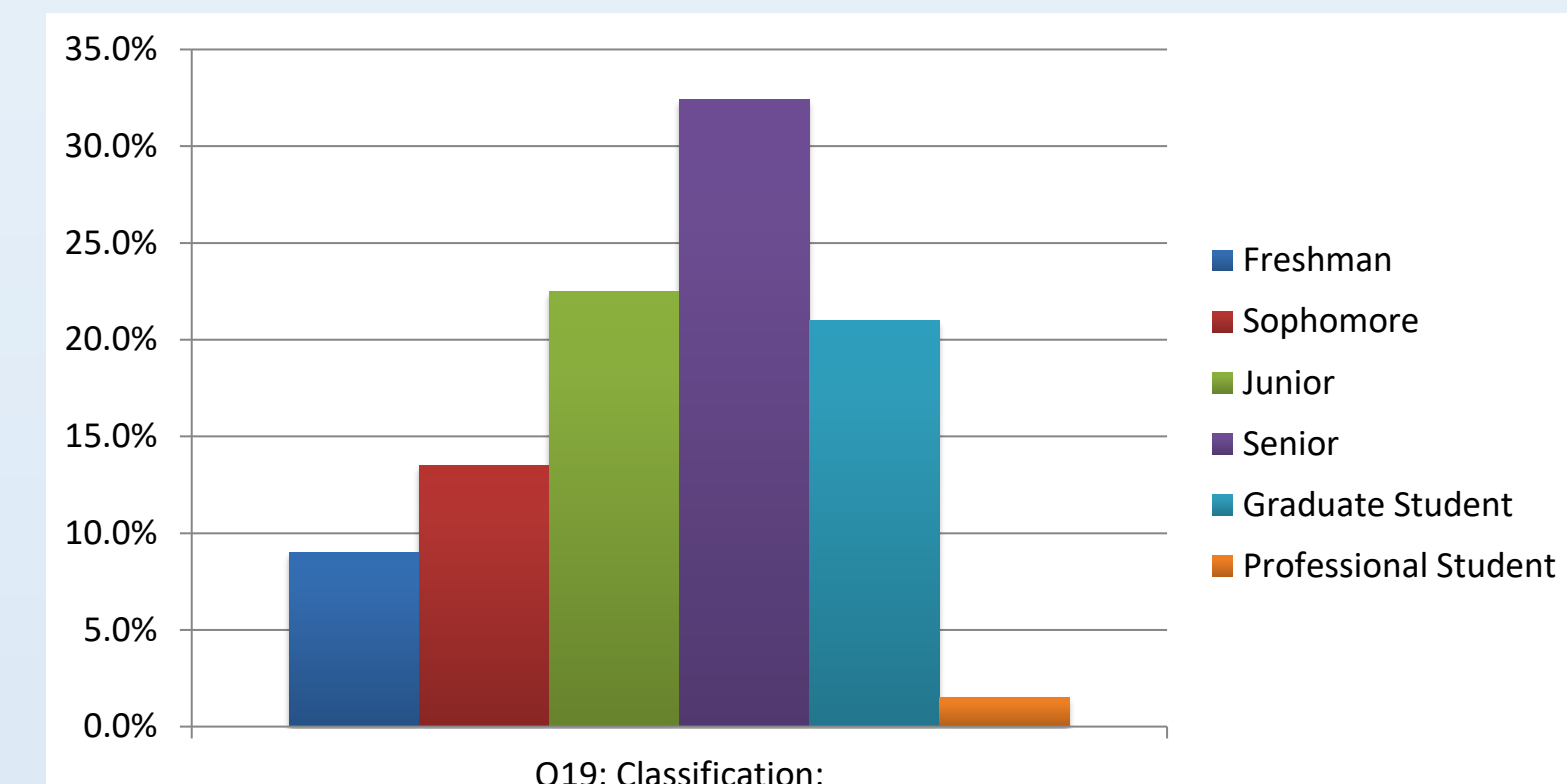
This research study drew a random sample (N=208) of males (n=48) and females (n=159) on how social media affects their diet. Seventy-five percent of the participants were undergraduates, and twenty-four percent were graduate students. The survey also illustrates that thirty-four percent of the students admitted they spent 6 hours and more per day checking social media sites, while thirty percent spent more than 4-5 hours, thirty percent spent 2-3 hours, and only eight percent spent less than one hour. Twenty-two percent of females and eight percent of males reported Social Media enormously influences them to try new foods/recipes. A study showed a positive correlation between the amount of time spent on social media and college students' eating habits. This study demonstrates social media capabilities to be used as sources of information for college students to decide their healthy dietary practices. The results showed no significant difference between time per week spent on social media and its correlation of students' influence to try new foods/ recipes on social media. (P < 0.05)

## RESULTS

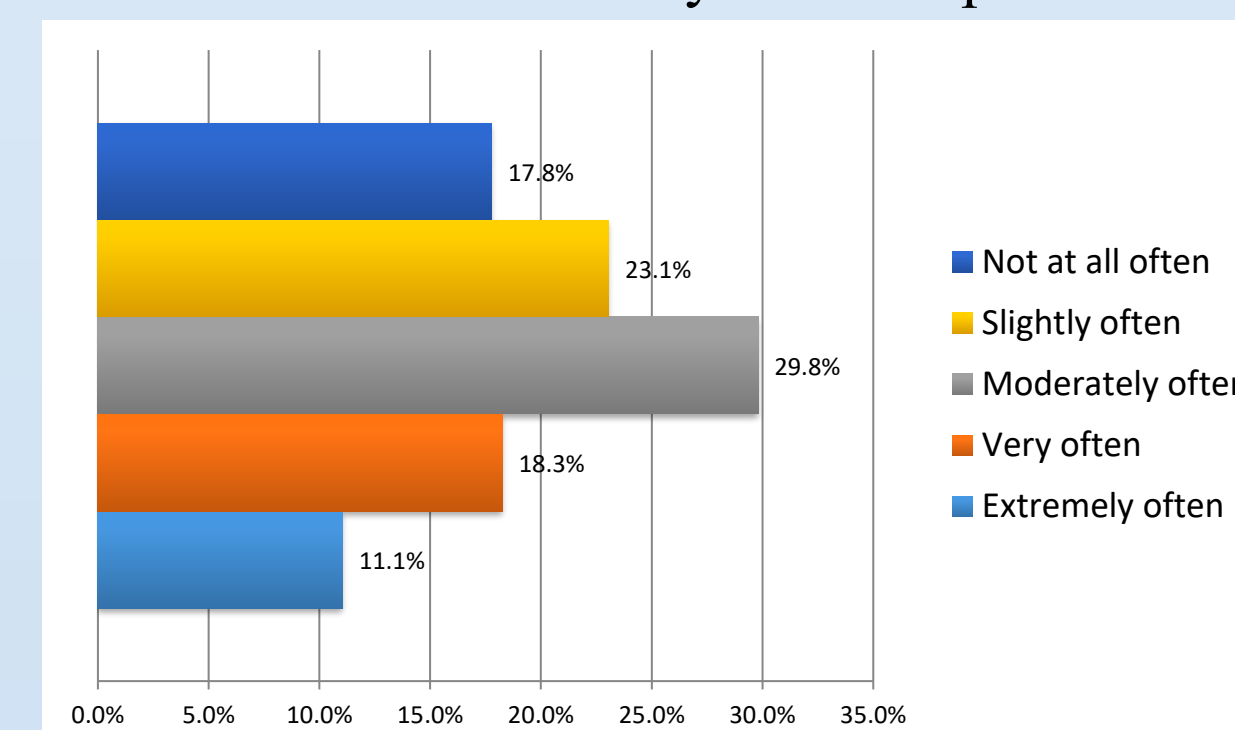
### Gender



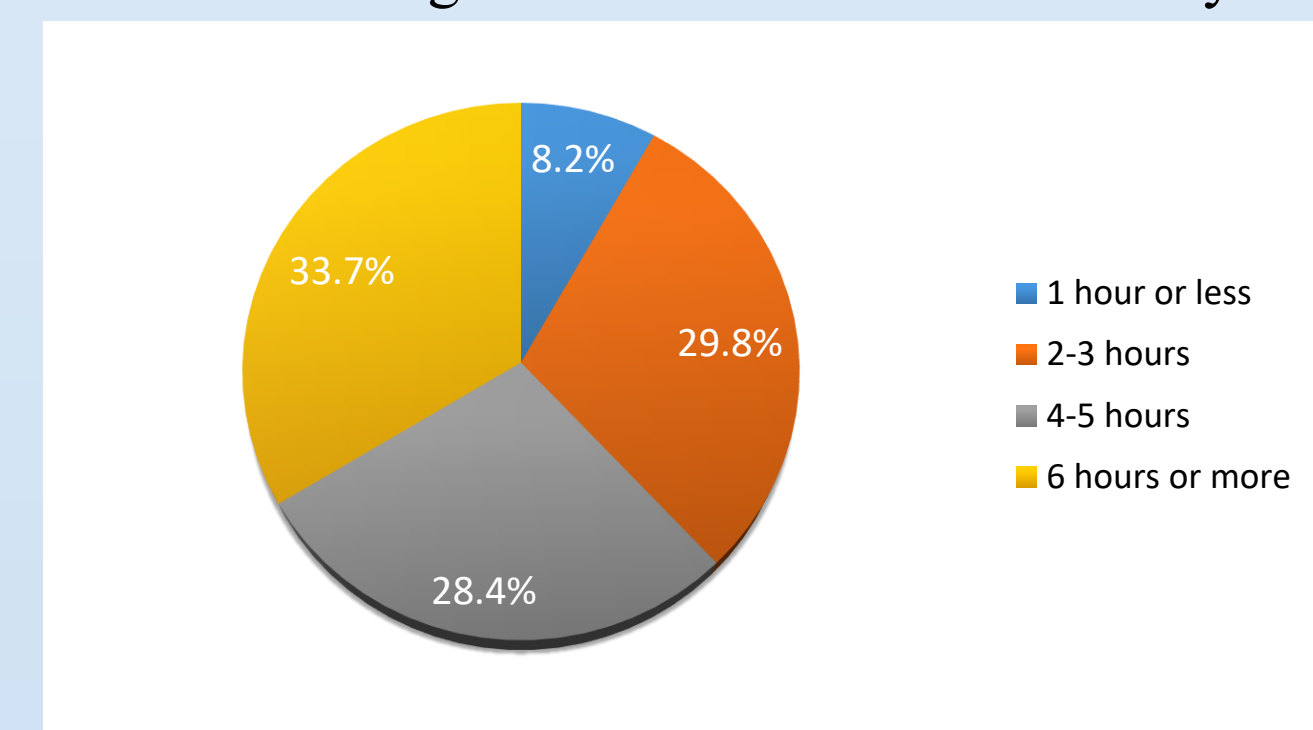
### Classification of Students



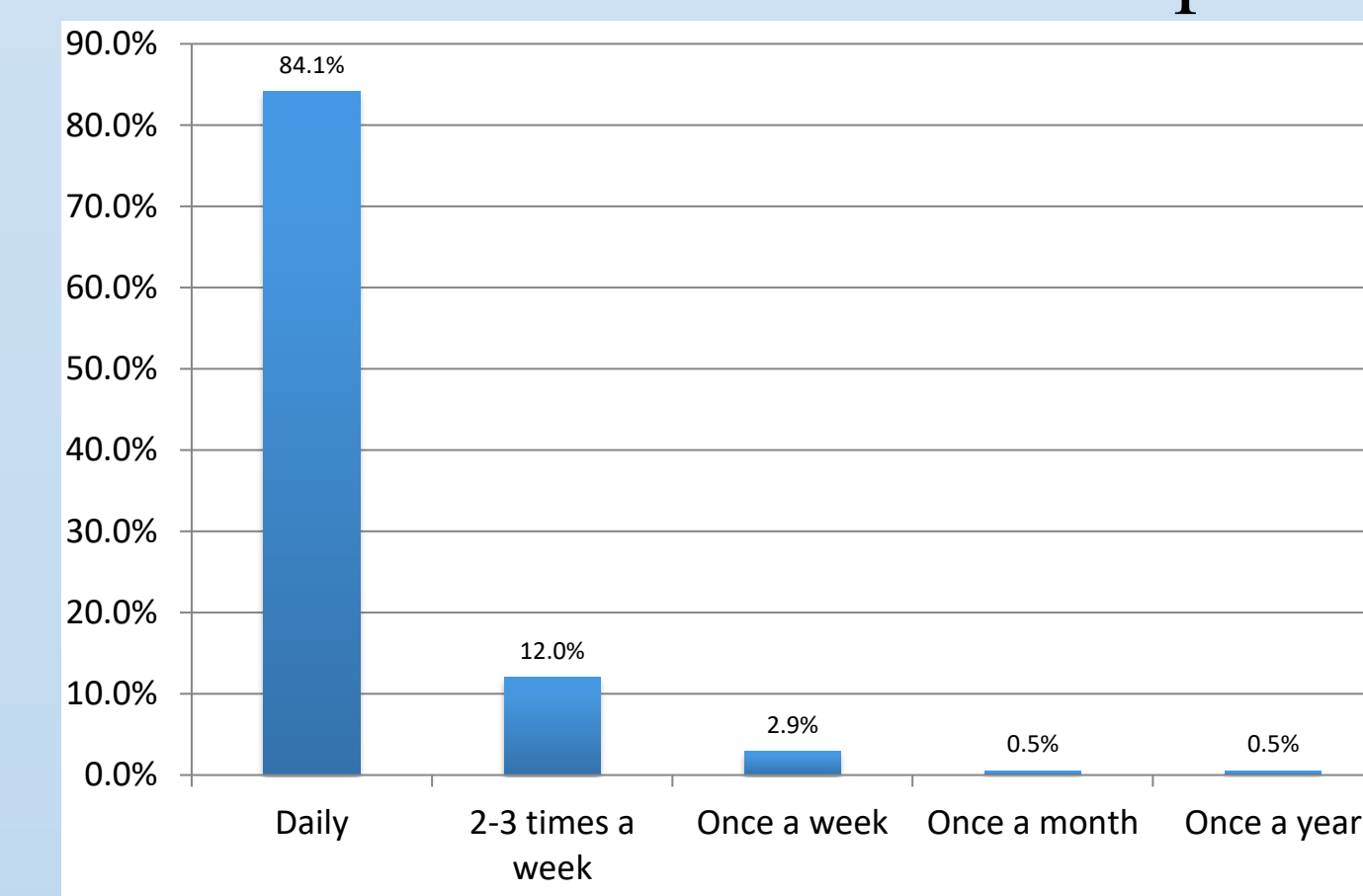
### Students' influence to try food recipes



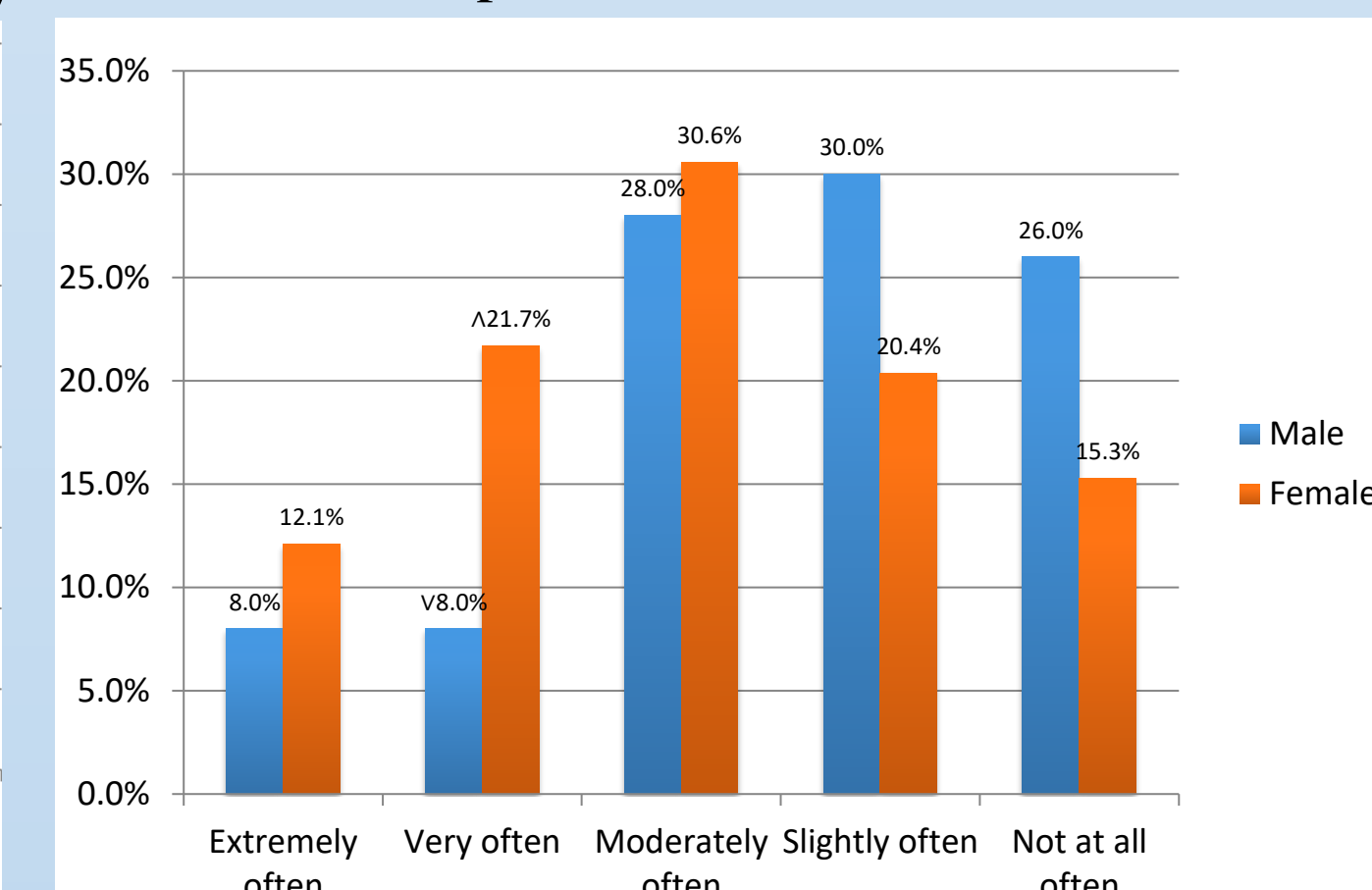
### Students' average time on social media weekly



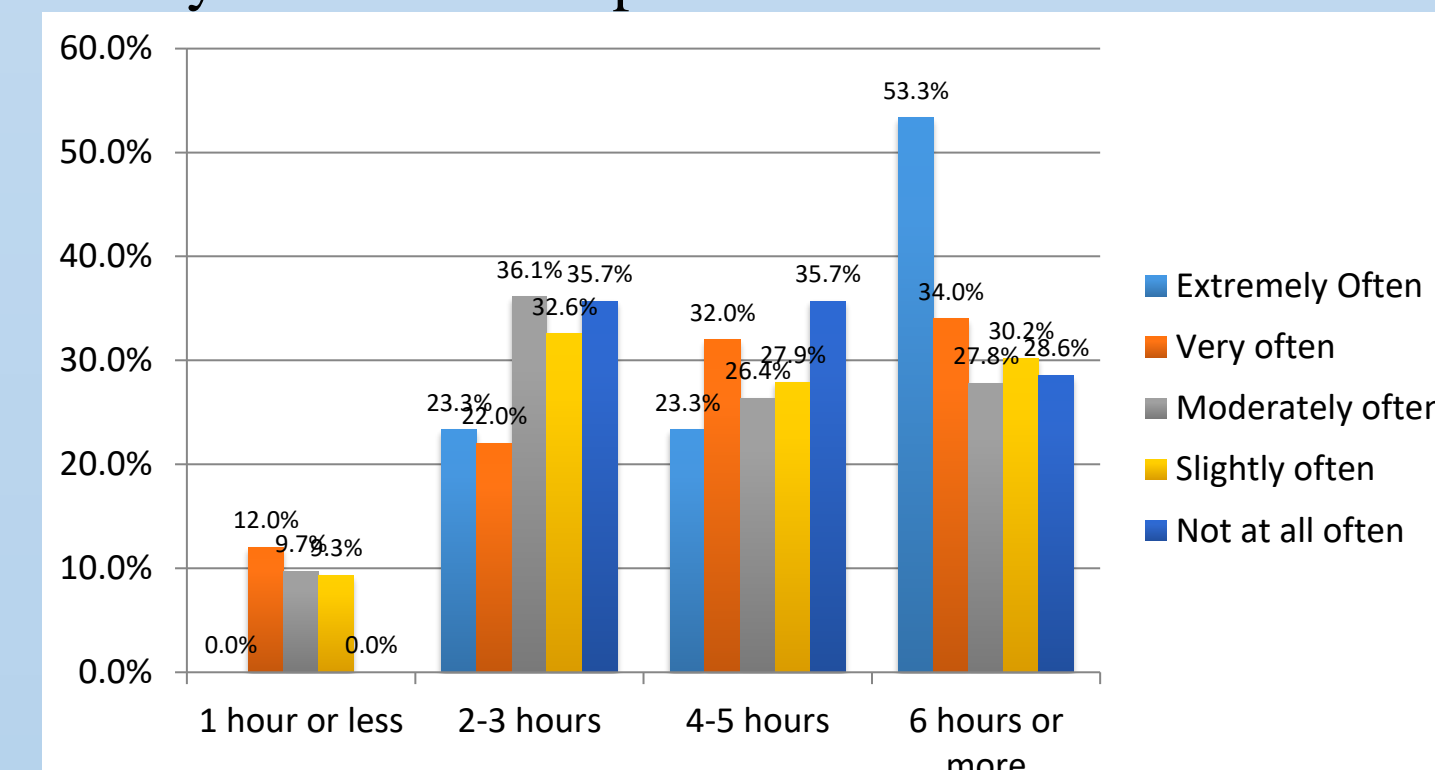
### Students' social media use frequency



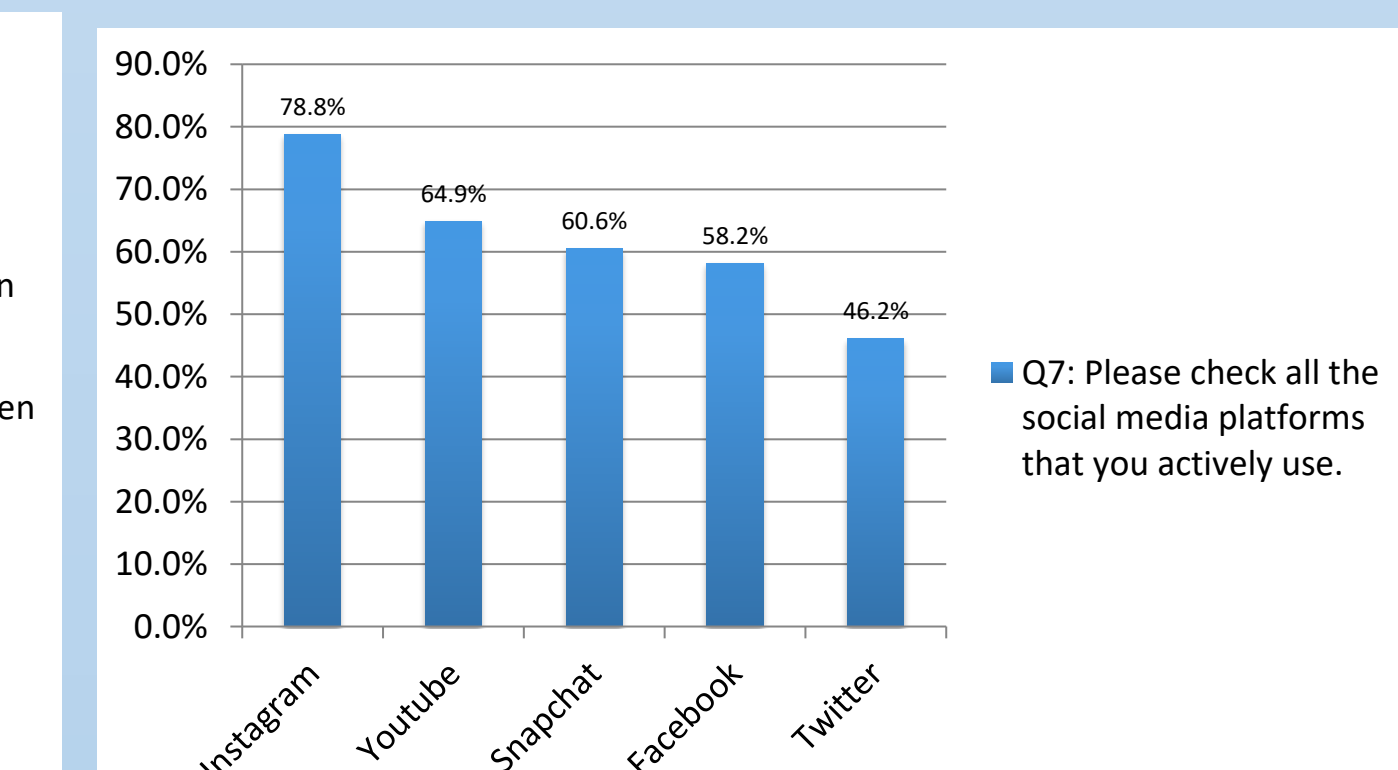
### Male vs. female data of their influence to try new foods/recipes seen on social media



### Time per week spent on social media vs. influence to try new foods/recipes



### Social media accounts most used



## CONCLUSIONS

The study's statistics may help dietitians, and health professionals find a correlation between social media and eating habits, thus creating future programs to help college students obtain a healthier lifestyle. Awareness of social media's influence on dietary habits is important to promote healthy eating amongst college students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## REFERENCES

- Watanabe-Ito, M., Kishi, E., & Shimizu, Y. (2020). Promoting Healthy Eating Habits for College Students Through Creating Dietary Diaries via a Smartphone App and Social Media Interaction: Online Survey Study. *JMIR MHealth and UHealth*, 8(3). doi:10.2196/17613
- Woods, A.D., Taylor, M., Br., & Dumas, O.K. (2019). Social Media Usage by Millennial College Students: The Development of the Digital-Age Student Leader. *The Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 23, 1.