Adolescent Exposure to COVID-19 News in Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

- Past studies have shown that Facebook is used for news the most, and this has helped to understand the ways that adults are informed about current events.
- However, it is unknown how adolescents share, read, and are affected by news on social media.
- It is also unclear how this information applies specifically to COVID-19 related news.
- **The purpose of this study is to determine which social media platforms are used by teens to obtain information about COVID-19 and explore what these adolescents do with this news and how it affects them.**

METHODS

Method of Data Collection:
The method being used to collect the data will be a survey. It will be shared on various places on Reddit and Facebook, along with the other students in the program.

Participant Criteria:
This study will only include participants within the age range of 14-18.

Variables and Questions:
The variables included in the study are:

- Social media platforms used to find COVID-19 news
- How often they:
  - seek COVID-19 news
  - see COVID-19 posts
  - share COVID-19 news
  - read an entire article on COVID-19
- Whether viewing COVID-19 news on social media gave them a better understanding of the pandemic

Data Analysis
Descriptive data regarding social media use and COVID-19 news was analyzed and presented.

RESULTS

Age

	n	%
14	7	13
15	9	16.7
16	12	22.2
17	18	33.4
18	7	13
19	1	1.9

Gender

	n	%
Male	20	37
Female	23	42.6
Non-Binary	5	9.3
Transgender Male	4	7.4
Transgender Female	1	1.9
Agender	1	1.9

Ethnicity

	n	%
Hispanic or Latino	8	14.5
Not Hispanic or Latino	47	85.5

Race

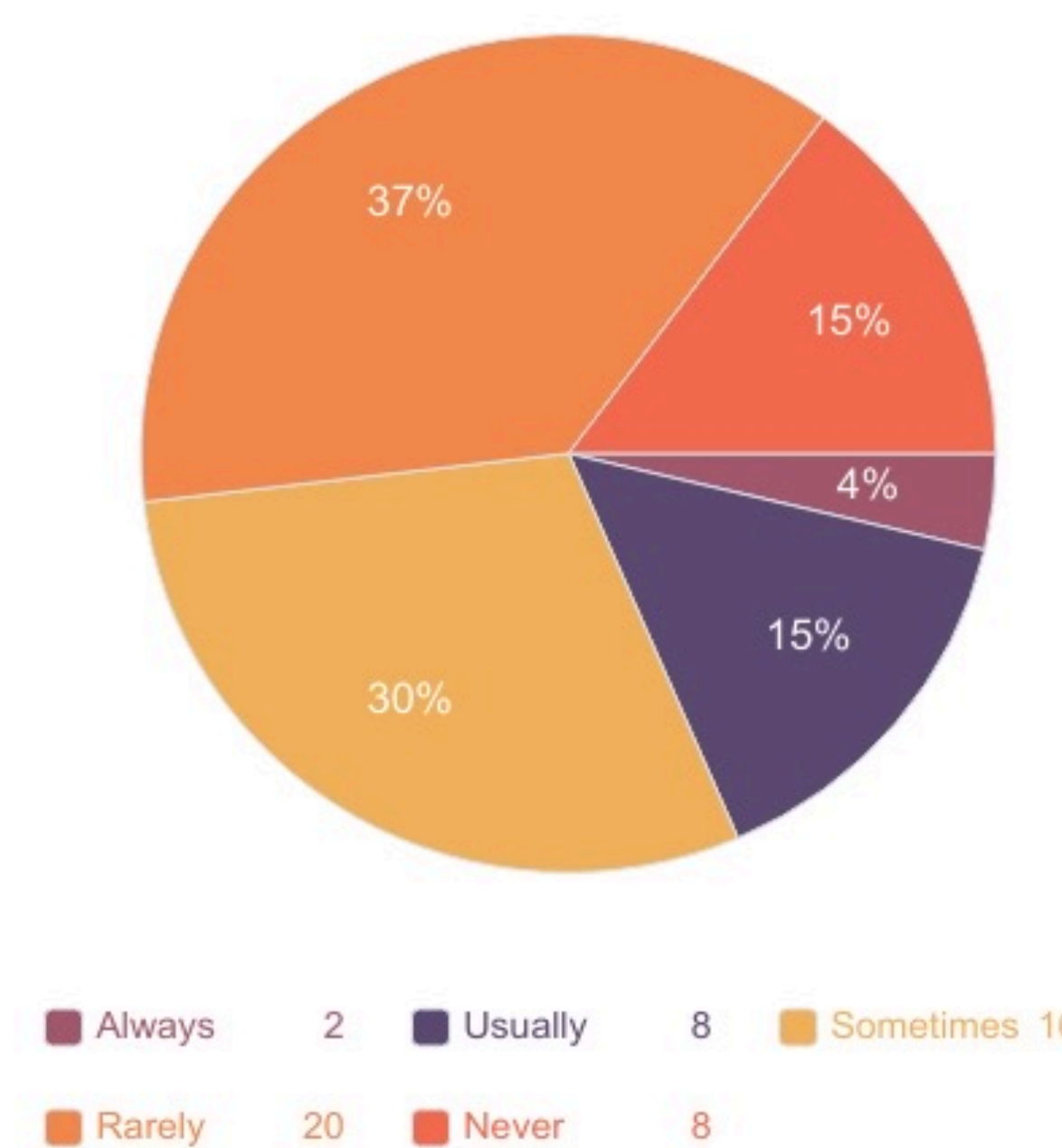|	n	%
White/Caucasian	32	60.4
Black or African American	2	3.8
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	3.8
Asian	13	24.5
Other	4	7.6

Have you seen COVID-19 news on social media?

	n	%
Yes	53	100
No	0	0

How often do you seek news related to COVID-19 on social media?

	n	%
Extremely Often	1	1.8
Often	5	9.1
Sometimes	11	20
Rarely	26	47.3
Never	12	21.8

How often do you see posts related to COVID-19 on social media?

	n	%
Every day	20	36.4
Multiple times a week	22	40
Once a week	6	10.9
Multiple times a month	6	10.9
Once a month	0	0
Never	1	1.8

Social Media Platforms Used to View COVID-19 News
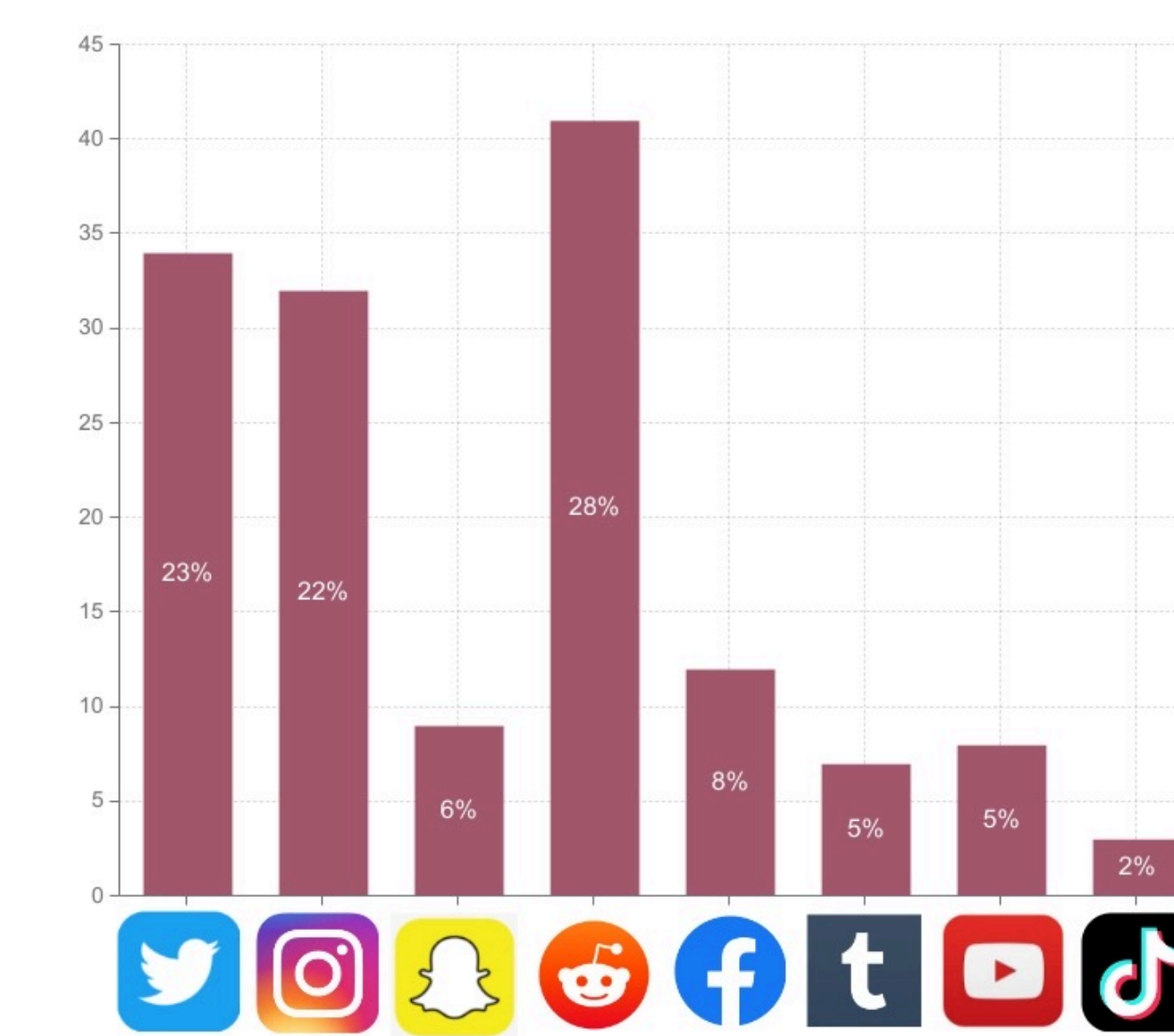
Do you agree or disagree with this statement: Seeing news related to COVID-19 on social media has helped my understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly Agree 10 | Agree 28 | Indifferent 12 | Disagree 4 | Strongly Disagree 1
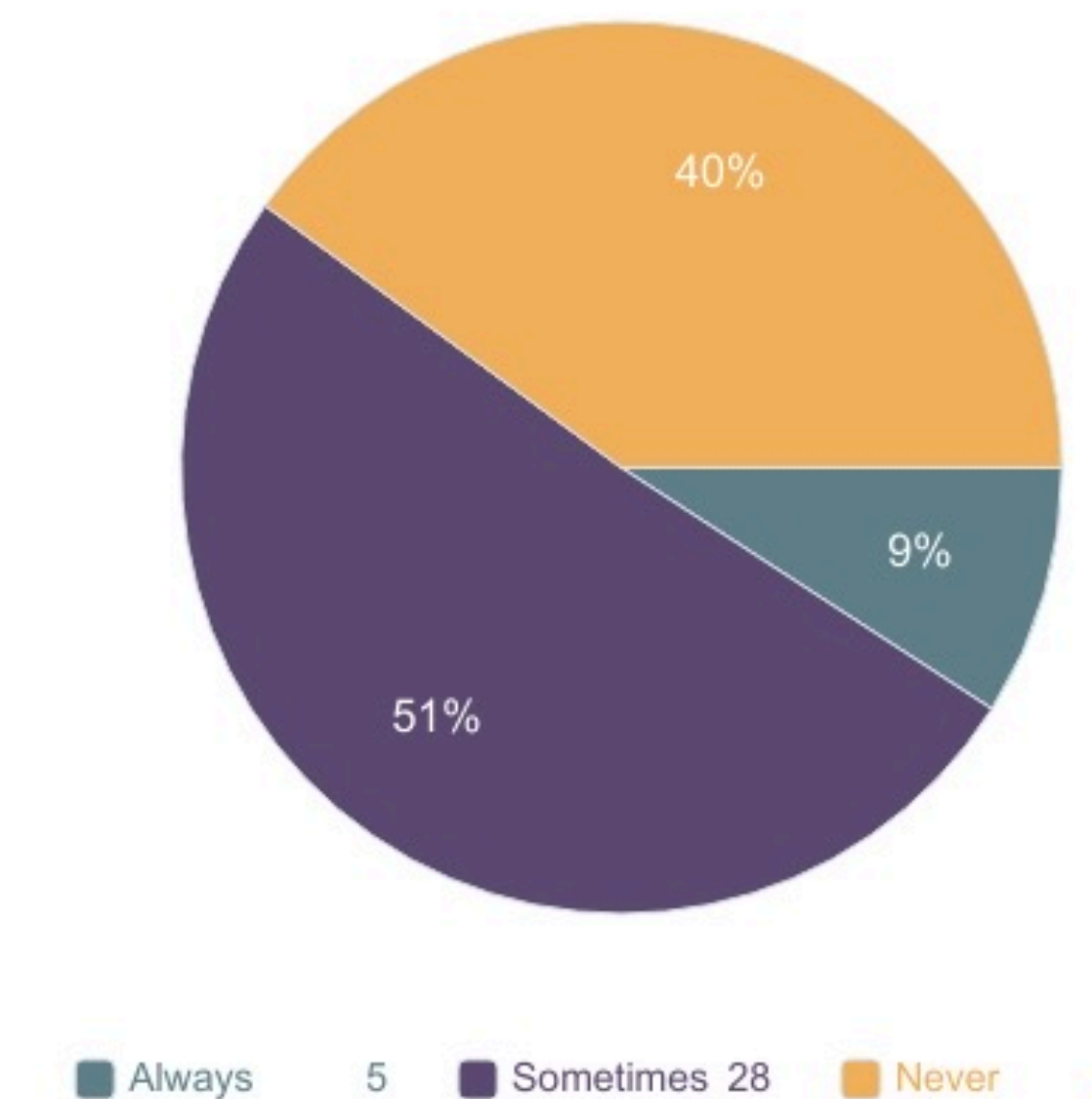

When you view COVID-19 news on social media, how often do you read the entire article?

Always 2 | Usually 8 | Sometimes 16 | Rarely 20 | Never 8
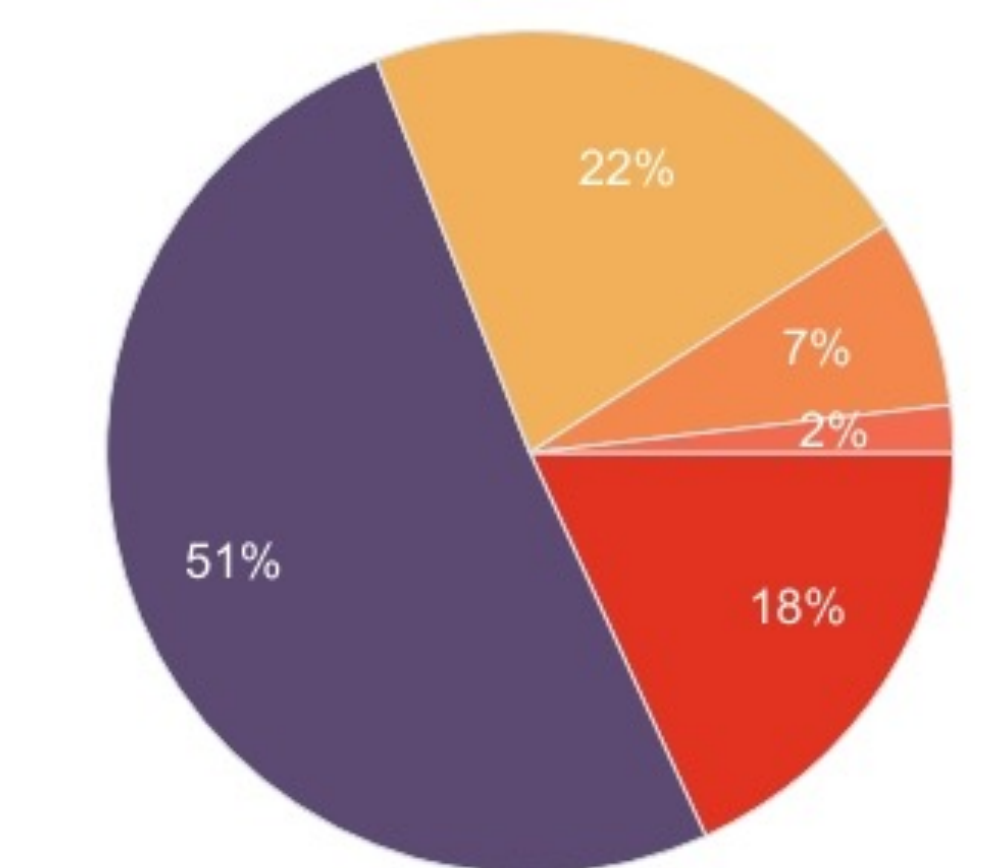
When you encounter COVID-19 related news, how often do you share it with friends or family?

Always 5 | Sometimes 28 | Never 22

CONCLUSIONS

Major findings:
- 69.1% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that COVID-19 news on social media has helped their understanding, yet only 18.5% said that they usually or always read the entire news article. This could show a vulnerability to fake news or misinformation since many people trust all of the news they see, even without reading the whole article.

Limitations:
- The data of the impact that COVID-19 news had on their understanding of COVID-19 may not be entirely accurate since we measured their perception of their understanding rather than their actual knowledge.
- The study wasn't very diverse as there was a great majority of White/Caucasian and Asian participants.

Implications:
- This information can inform us on how to not only educate teens specifically on COVID-19, but also other important topics as well. Many of the respondents didn't seek out COVID-19 news, but over 76% saw posts related to it at least multiple times every week. Many also felt informed by it. This could show that social media can potentially be a useful tool to inform teens if it is handled right.

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