

My Screen Addiction: The Effect of Prolonged Screen Time on Mental Health in College Students

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Background

Approximately 1 in 5 college students are burdened by depression.¹

Poor mental health outcomes and disorders lead to decreased academic performance, negative lifestyle choices, and weakened immune system.²

Increased daily screen time associated with lower psychological well-being among U.S children and adolescents.³⁻⁴

Limited research during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵

Objectives

1. Assess screen time and social media usage among college students during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
2. Determine if there is an association between screen time and mental health outcomes in college students during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

Methods

We conducted a cross-sectional survey among 55 participants aiming to find an association between phone screen time and mental health outcomes during April 2021.

The survey was advertised through social media.

Questions asked pertained to demographic information, screen time, and perceptions of mental health.

Responses were analyzed using SPSS and Google Sheets.

Results

Table 1: Demographics (N= 55)

Gender	
Male	36%
Female	62%
Age	
18-20	21.80%
21-23	60%
24-26	14.50%
> or = 27	3.60%
Current College Student	
Yes	87.30%
No	12.70%
Year in College	
Year 1	14.50%
Year 2	7.30%
Year 3	18.20%
Year 4	32.70%
Year 5	7.30%
Graduate	18.20%
N/A	1.80%

Fig. 1: Average Screen Time ≥6-9 Hrs.

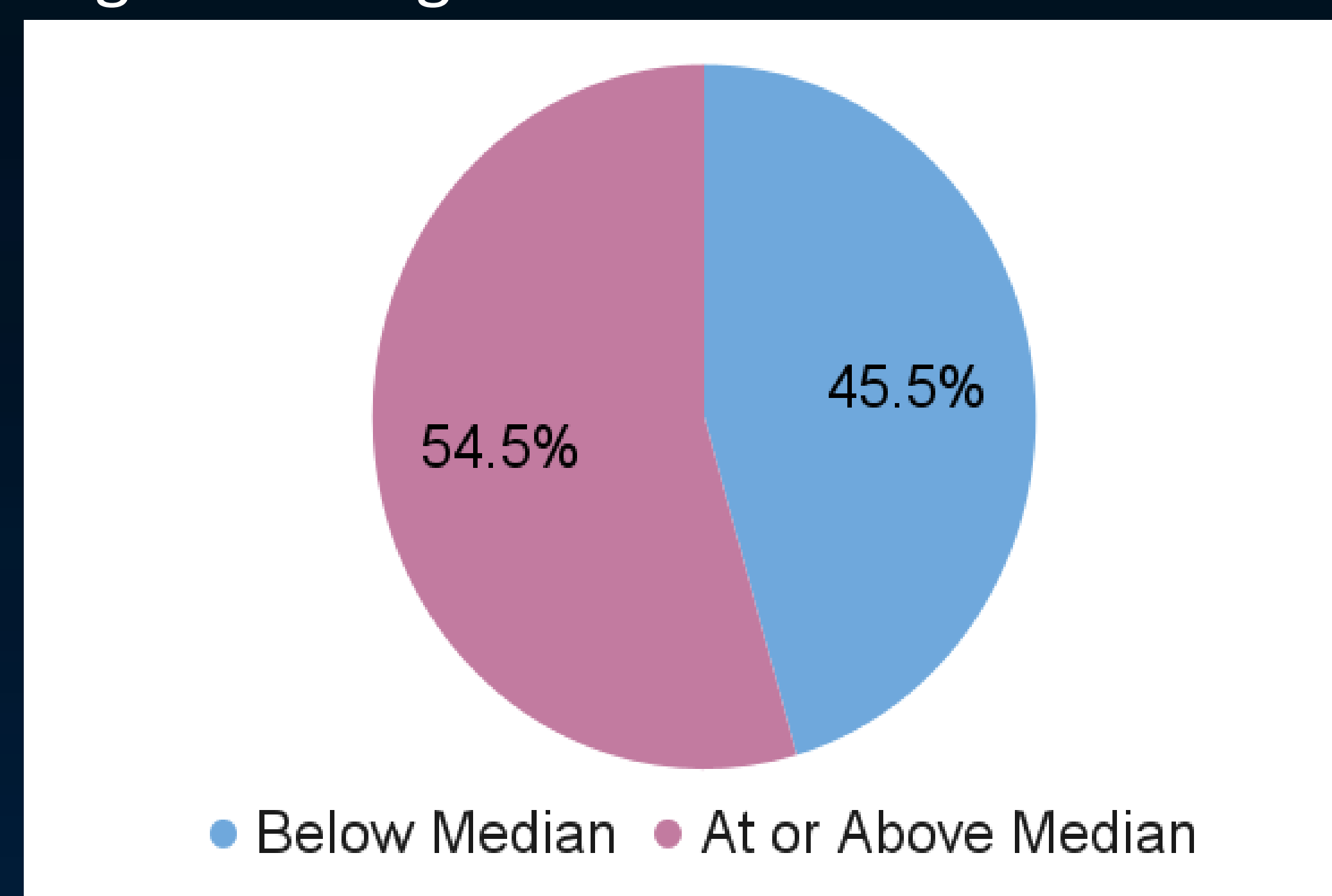


Fig. 2: Average Social Media <6-9 Hrs.

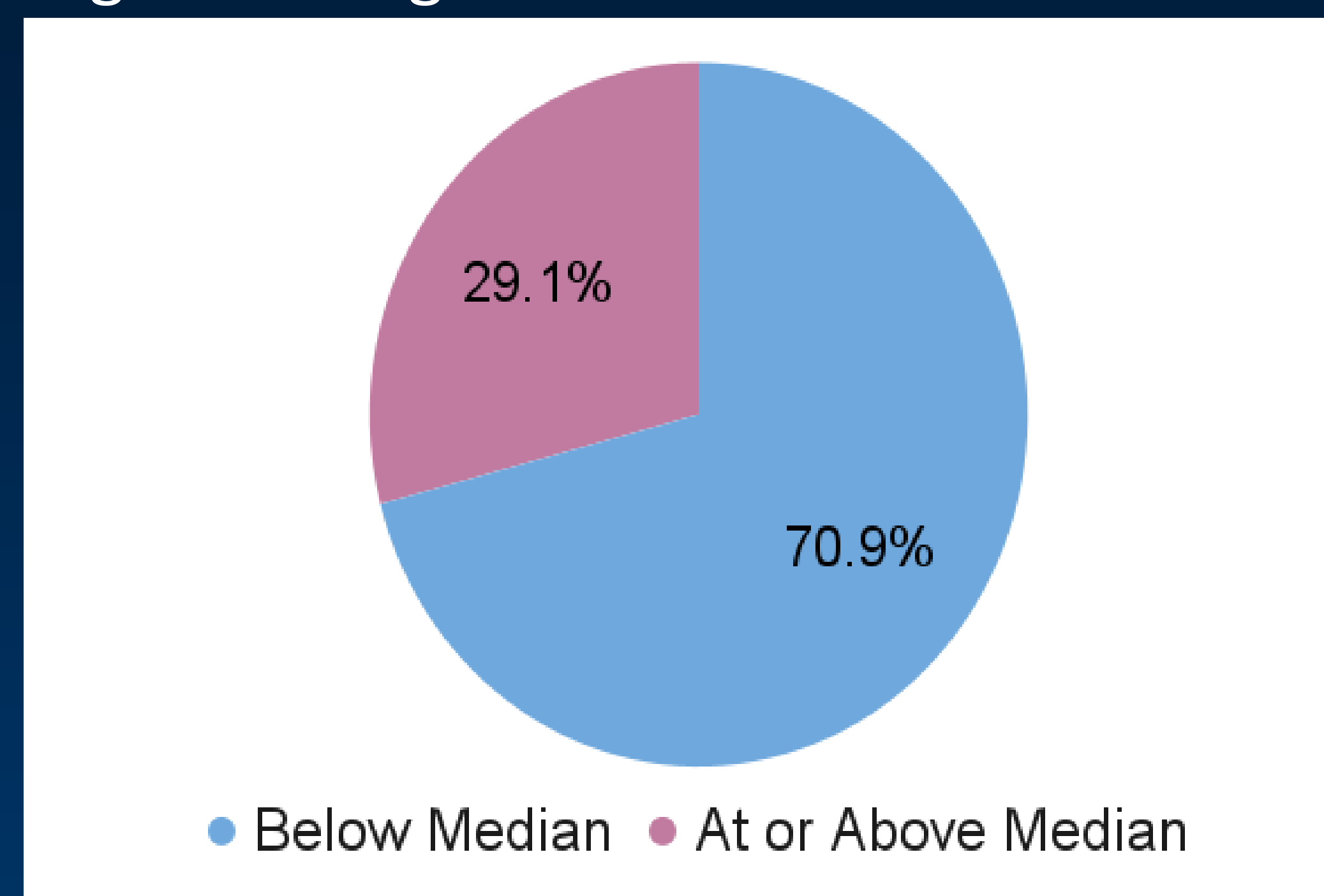
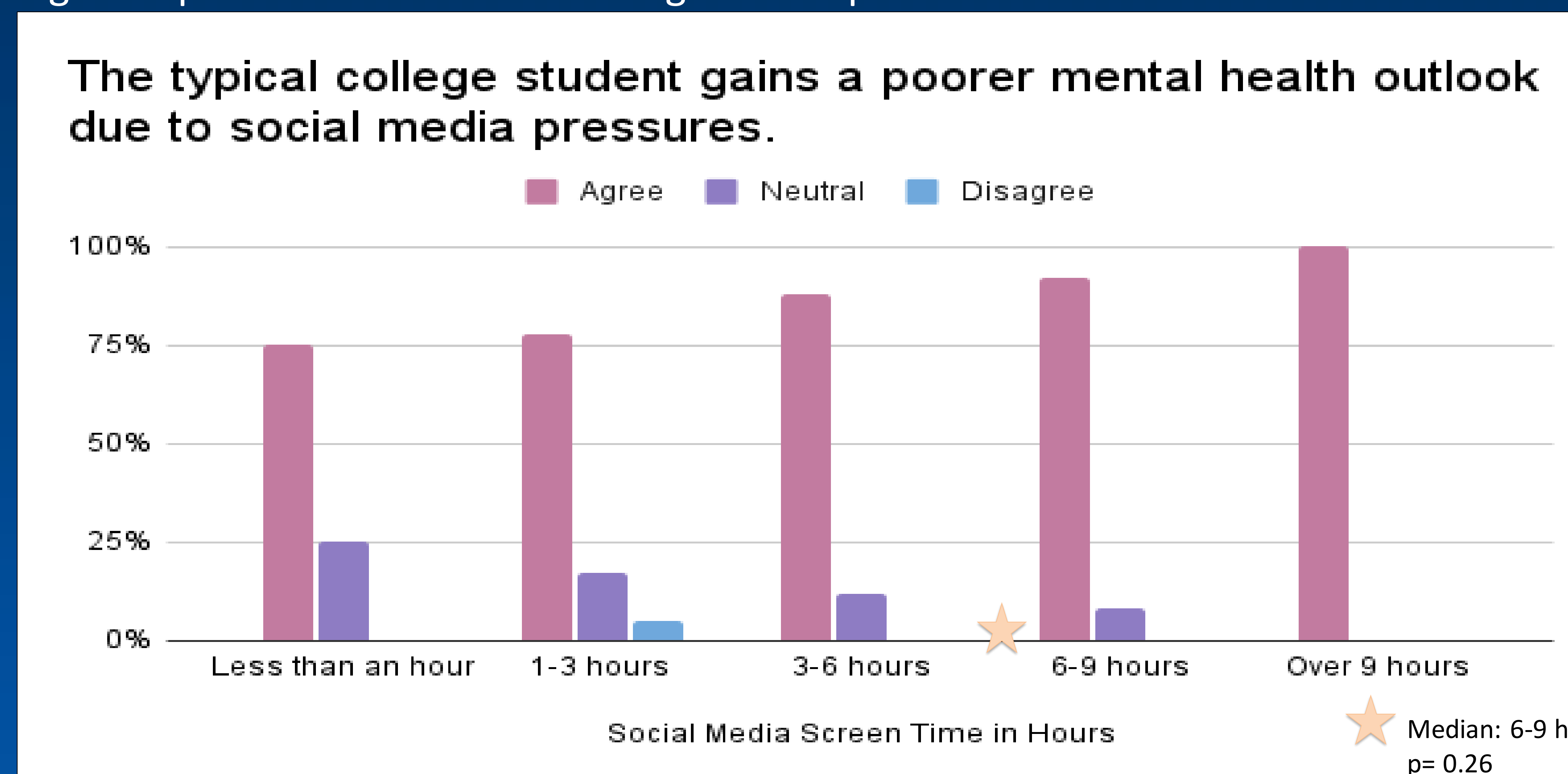


Fig. 3: Exposed individuals tend to agree with poorer mental health outcomes



Conclusions

Most agreed that social media has a negative effect on mental health outcomes.

But there was no significant association between exposure and outcome (p= 0.26).

The COVID-19 pandemic likely increased depressive symptoms and poor mental health outlooks.

Discrepancy between screen time and social media usage may be due to remote learning.

Policy Implications

Need for more participants to identify potential associations.

Education and advocacy for mental health awareness and excessive media exposure.

Provide students with coping strategies and tools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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References

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