



# Understanding News Articles about Teens, Social Media, and Depression

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## INTRODUCTION

- News stories about links between social media and depression for teens are very common
- The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with increased consumption and trust in the news
- Little is known about how journalists report on the relationship between social media and depression among teens

### BREAKING NEWS

The purpose of this study was to understand how journalists represent studies on social media and depression in the news.

## METHODS

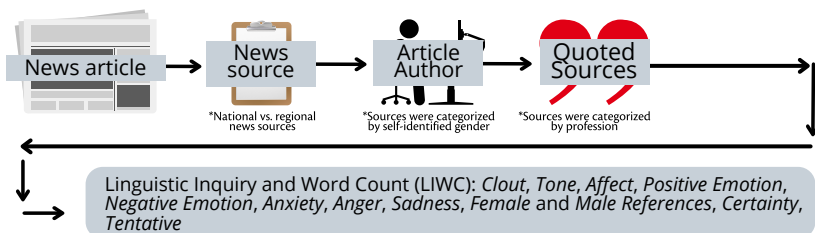
This study used linguistic analysis to evaluate publicly available news media content; thus it was IRB exempt.

### Search Strategy

- Articles published from 2010 - 2020 were identified from ProQuest: US Newsstream
  - Search terms: depression, social media, and teens
- Inclusion criteria:
  - Specifically referenced a research article about social media and depression for teens

### Data Collection

- Each article was assessed to record the type of news source (national vs. regional), the article author's self-identified gender, and the quoted source's profession followed by a linguistic analysis



### Analysis

- T-tests were selected a priori to compare LIWC output scores by news source, author gender, and quoted scientists vs. none

## RESULTS

- Search yielded 565 articles
- A total of 59 articles met inclusion criteria



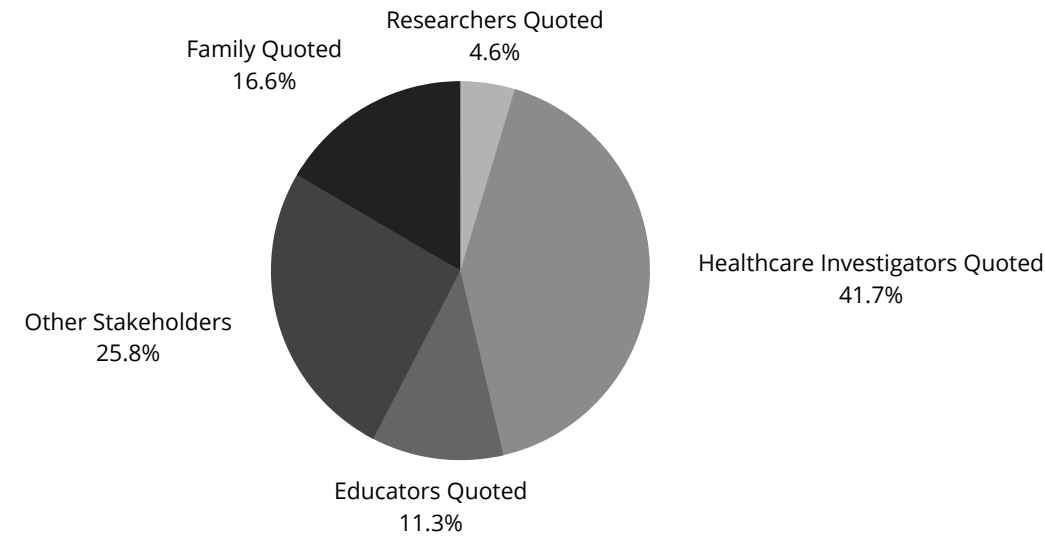
News Source	
National	22
Regional	33
Missing	4



Article Author	
Male	14
Female	33
Missing	11



Scientist vs. None	
Scientist Articles	36
No Scientists	23

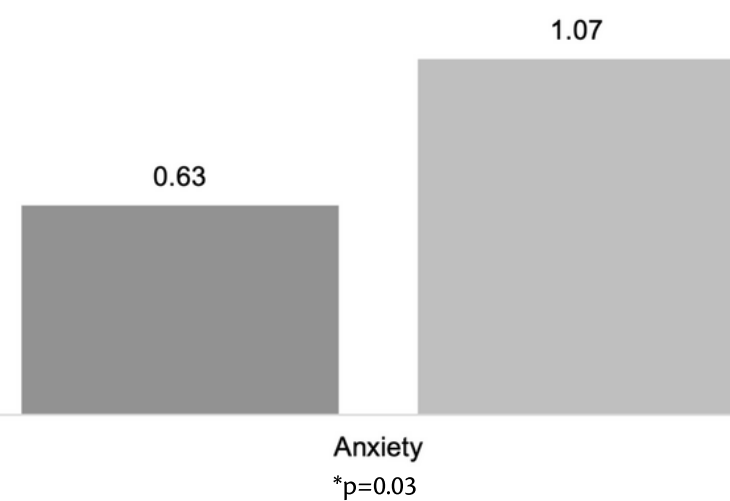


- A total of 149 individuals were quoted as sources
- Scientists included quoted researchers and healthcare investigators

- There were no significant differences between national and regional newspapers for any LIWC variables

### Author Gender

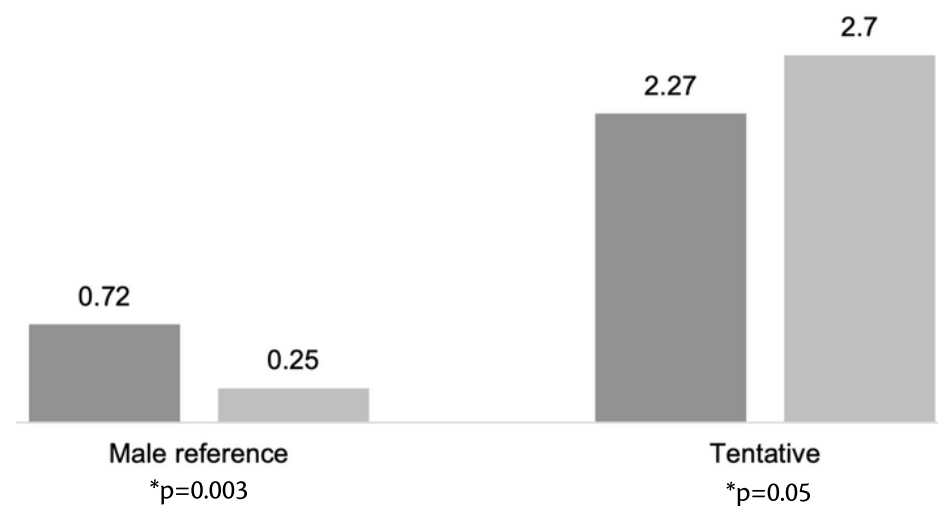
■ Male ■ Female



- Comparing male and female author articles, *anxiety-related words* (worried, fearful) were used more often by female authors than male authors
- The comparison of all other LIWC variables was insignificant

### Quoted Scientist vs. None

■ Scientist ■ Non-Scientist



- Comparing quoted sources who were scientists vs. non-scientists, scientist articles used significantly more *male references* (boy, his, dad)
- Non-scientist articles used significantly more *tentative-related words* (maybe, perhaps)
- The comparison of all other LIWC variables was insignificant

## CONCLUSIONS

- Increased *anxiety-related words* (worried, fearful) among female article authors may suggest differences in writing styles or more frequent disclosure of anxiety to female article authors
- Increased *male references* (boy, his, dad) in articles quoting scientists may suggest that males were referenced more than females in the articles
- Articles that did not quote scientists used more *tentative-related words* (maybe, perhaps) than if they had quoted scientists as scientists may have received training to sound more certain

## IMPLICATIONS

- The language that scientists use when talking to journalists may be increasing society's anxiety or uncertainty around teens, depression, and social media
- This information could aid pediatricians to better understand features of journalistic coverage that could affect the general public's perceptions of the impact of social media on adolescent mental health

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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