

Social Media & Mental Health in Diverse Adolescents

Analyzing the bidirectional relationship between mental health and social media

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PROJECT SMART

ADOLESCENT HEALTH

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH



OVERVIEW

Research at a Glance

01

Introduction

Science Influencers program & Project SMART

02

Background

Adolescent development & digital behaviors

03

Methods

Quantitative analysis of social media data

04

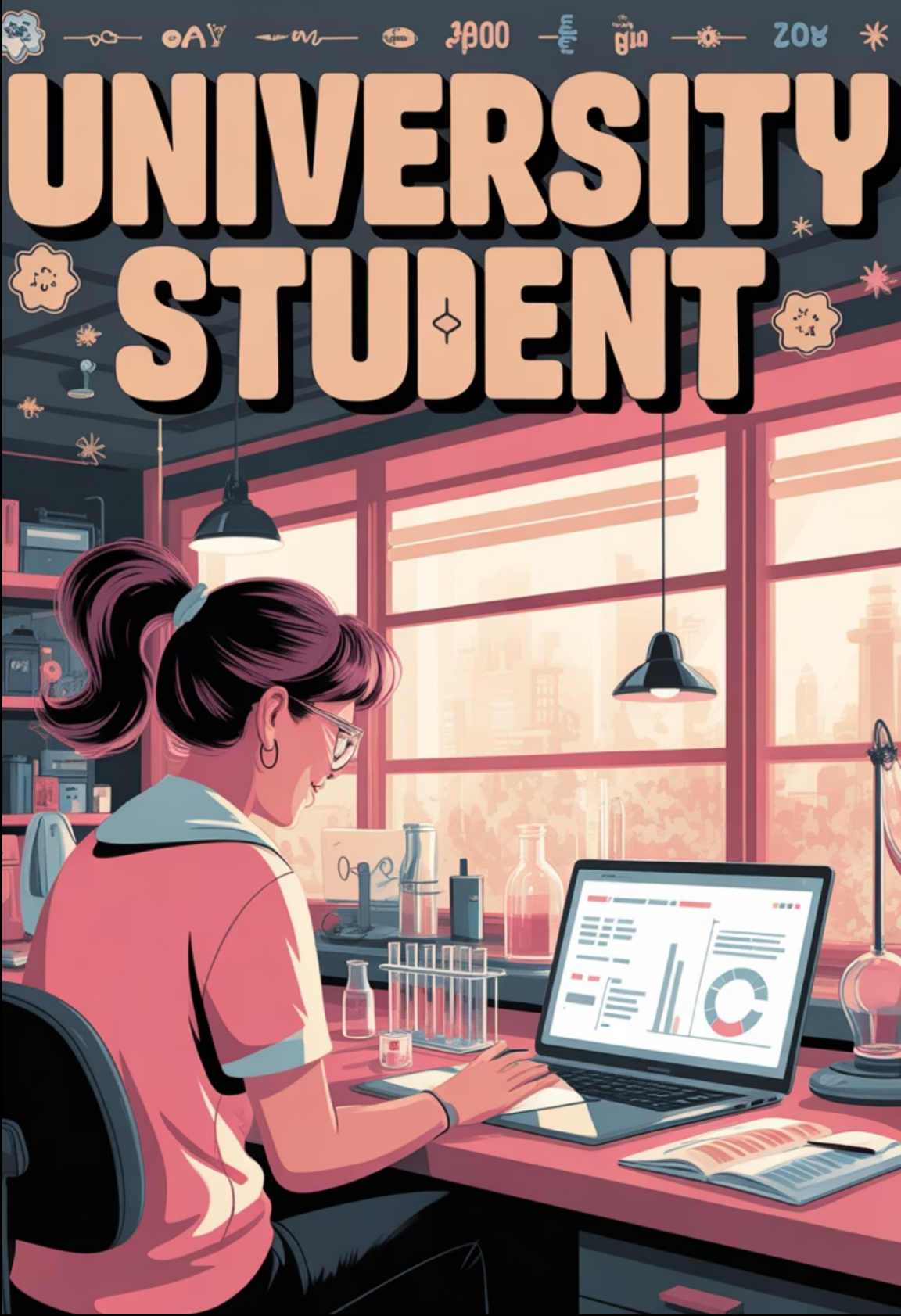
Findings

Passive scrolling vs. active engagement

05

Summary

Implications for public health & policy



UNIVERSITY STUDENT

INTRODUCTION

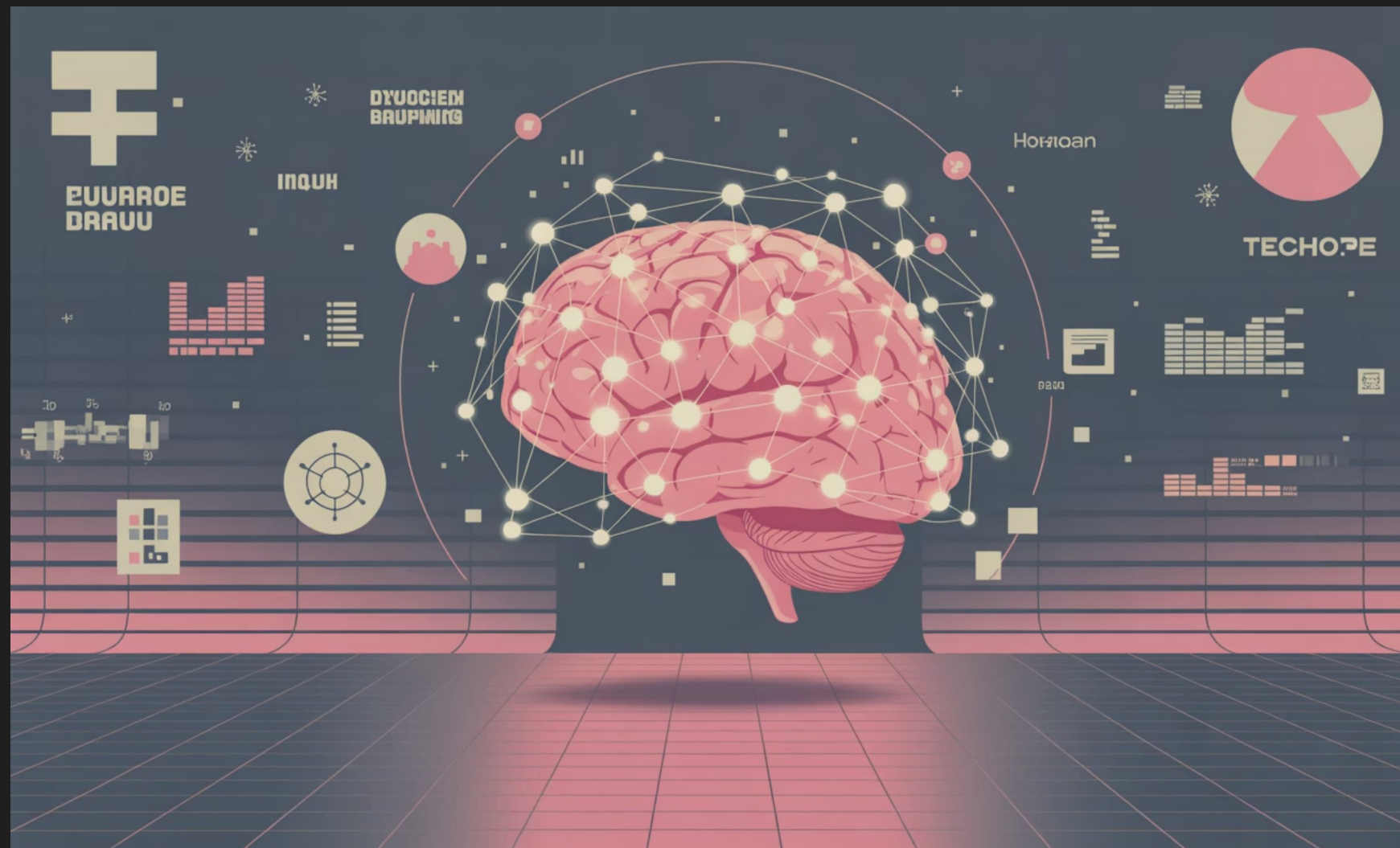
Bridging Science & Communication

Through the USDA-funded Science Influencers program, Texas A&M undergraduates integrated communication with science. In the last 8 months, I have been working with Dr. Jun Wang and Project SMART, a research initiative focused on technology and behavioral health.

My project—*"Data-Driven Insights on Social Media and Mental Health in Diverse Adolescents"*—examined how digital behaviors influence psychological well-being, bridging complex health data and public understanding.

BACKGROUND

Why This Research Matters



A Critical Window

Adolescence is a critical period for neurobiological development, and social media has introduced new variables into youth mental health.

Project SMART examines digital behaviors through a data-driven lens, identifying how online interactions correlate with psychological well-being in diverse populations.

As a "Science Influencer," I translated complex health insights into narratives for adolescents, parents, and educators.

Research Methodology

Data Cleaning

Prepare and harmonize variables, remove inconsistencies.

Quantitative Analysis

Assess correlations between screen time and mental health.

Data Collection

Collect data from participants including children and their parents

Science Communication

Frame findings for non-academic audiences using storytelling.

METHODS

What We Measured



Word Count

Frequency of negative words being used in children interviews



Mental Health Markers

Self-reported anxiety, depression, and loneliness indicators



Diverse Populations

Focused analysis on marginalized and diverse adolescent groups



Communication

Framing and storytelling to disseminate findings to non-academic stakeholders



KEY FINDINGS

It's Not *How Much* – It's *How*

Passive Scrolling

High-frequency social comparison linked to negative mental health outcomes

Active Engagement

Creative digital participation showed less harmful associations with well-being

KEY FINDINGS

Protective Factors for Diverse Youth

Critical Interventions Needed

The data underscored digital literacy and parental mediation as protective factors—especially for marginalized and diverse youth.

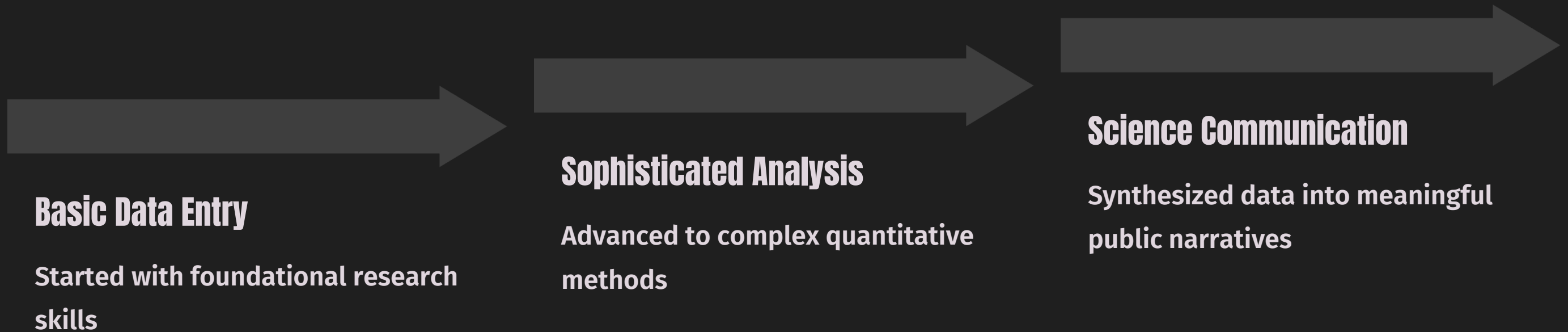
These findings highlight a critical need for targeted educational interventions that go beyond simple screen-time limits.

- The quality and nature of digital interaction matters more than time spent online.



SUMMARY

Professional Growth & Impact



This REEU experience was instrumental in my development as both a researcher and communicator—skills directly applicable to my future career in public health and behavioral science.

Fostering a Safer Digital Generation

By sharing these findings at the Annual Research Symposium, I aim to advocate for safer digital environments and continue bridging the gap between research and real-world impact.

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

PROJECT SMART

Tenages



Technology