

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TEENAGERS' SLEEP QUALITY.

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Abstract. The widespread use of social media has significantly influenced teenagers' daily lives, including their sleeping habits. This paper examines the relationship between social media use and sleep quality among adolescents by reviewing previous scientific studies. It discusses how excessive screen time, nighttime social media use, blue light exposure, and emotional engagement can delay sleep and reduce its quality. The paper also highlights the possible consequences of poor sleep, such as decreased academic performance, reduced concentration, and mental health problems. Based on the reviewed literature, the study emphasizes the importance of developing healthy digital habits and maintaining a balanced use of social media to support teenagers' overall well-being.

Key words: Social media, teenagers, adolescents, sleep quality, screen time, blue light, digital habits, mental health.

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of teenagers' daily lives. Digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube have significantly changed the way adolescents communicate, learn, and spend their leisure time. These platforms provide numerous opportunities for social interaction, entertainment, and access to educational resources. However, alongside their benefits, concerns have emerged regarding the negative effects of excessive social media use on teenagers' physical and mental health, particularly their sleep quality and sleeping habits.

Sleep plays a vital role in adolescents' healthy development. Adequate sleep is essential for physical growth, emotional well-being, cognitive functioning, and academic success. Health experts recommend that teenagers receive sufficient and uninterrupted sleep each night to maintain their overall health. Nevertheless, many adolescents spend several hours using social media before bedtime, which often reduces both the quantity and quality of their sleep.

The use of smartphones and other digital devices late at night exposes teenagers to blue light, online notifications, and emotionally stimulating content, all of which can interfere with normal sleep patterns. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics excessive screen time, especially before bedtime, is associated with shorter sleep duration and poorer sleep quality among adolescents¹. Similarly, Woods and Scott found that frequent nighttime social media use significantly increases the risk of sleep disturbances, anxiety, and lower self-esteem among teenagers. These findings highlight the growing importance of understanding the relationship between social media use and adolescent sleep habits.

Social media has become deeply embedded in teenagers' everyday routines. Many adolescents check their phones immediately after waking up and continue using social media platforms throughout the day. For teenagers, these platforms serve multiple purposes, including communication with friends, participation in online communities, entertainment, and educational activities.

One of the primary contributors to sleep disturbances among adolescents is smartphone use before bedtime. Electronic devices emit blue light, which suppresses the production of melatonin, the hormone responsible for regulating the body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Reduced melatonin production delays sleep onset and makes it more difficult

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. Media Use in School-Aged Children and Adolescents, 2016, p. 3.

for individuals to fall asleep. Consequently, teenagers may experience insufficient sleep and reduced alertness during the following day. Chang reported that

exposure to light emitted from electronic devices before bedtime can significantly delay sleep onset and negatively affect alertness the next morning².

Another significant factor influencing sleep quality is the emotional and psychological engagement created by social media. Adolescents frequently spend more time online than intended by scrolling through social media feeds, watching videos, responding to messages, or interacting with online content. The phenomenon commonly referred to as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) encourages teenagers to remain connected to social media even during hours that should be devoted to rest. Many young people feel anxious about missing important updates, conversations, or trends if they disconnect from their devices.

Research conducted by Twenge indicates that increased screen time is associated with shorter sleep duration and a higher likelihood of insufficient sleep among adolescents³. Their findings suggest that teenagers who spend extended periods using electronic devices are more likely to experience disrupted sleeping patterns compared with their peers who engage in less screen time. Despite these advantages, excessive social media use, particularly during the evening and nighttime hours, has been linked to unhealthy sleeping habits.

Poor sleep has serious consequences for adolescents' overall well-being. Sleep deprivation negatively affects concentration, memory retention, and academic

² Chang, A. M., Aeschbach, D., Duffy, J. F., & Czeisler, C. A. Evening Use of Light-Emitting eReaders Negatively Affects Sleep, Circadian Timing, and Next-Morning Alertness, 2015, p. 1234.

³ Twenge, J. M., Krizan, Z., & Hisler, G. Decreases in Self-Reported Sleep Duration Among U.S. Adolescents Associated with New Media Screen Time, 2018, p. 49.

performance. Teenagers who do not receive adequate sleep often struggle to remain attentive during lessons, complete academic tasks effectively, and manage their emotions appropriately. Moreover, chronic sleep disturbances may contribute to psychological issues such as anxiety, stress, mood swings, and irritability.

Woods and Scott reported that frequent nighttime social media use is strongly associated with poor sleep quality, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and lower self-esteem

among adolescents⁴. These findings demonstrate that the effects of social media extend beyond physical tiredness and may significantly influence teenagers' mental and emotional health.

Despite these concerns, social media itself is not inherently harmful. When used responsibly and in moderation, social media platforms can support educational development, facilitate communication, and provide valuable learning opportunities. The negative consequences generally arise when excessive social media use interferes with healthy daily routines, particularly regular sleeping schedules.

Developing healthy digital habits is essential for minimising the negative effects of social media. Teenagers can improve their sleep quality by limiting screen time before bedtime, disabling unnecessary notifications during the night, and maintaining consistent sleeping schedules. Parents, educators, and healthcare professionals also play an important role in promoting responsible and balanced social media use among adolescents.

In conclusion, social media has a significant influence on teenagers' sleep habits. While digital platforms offer valuable opportunities for communication, education, and entertainment, excessive social media use especially before bedtime can negatively affect both the quality and duration of sleep. Exposure to blue light, emotional engagement with

⁴ Woods, H. C., & Scott, H. #Sleepyteens: Social Media Use in Adolescence Is Associated with Poor Sleep Quality, Anxiety, Depression and Low Self-Esteem, 2016, p. 43.

online content, and prolonged screen time contribute to sleep disturbances among adolescents.

The existing literature demonstrates that poor sleep resulting from excessive social media use may negatively influence teenagers' academic performance, emotional wellbeing, and physical health. Sleep deprivation can reduce concentration, increase psychological stress, and negatively affect daily functioning, making this issue particularly important for adolescents' healthy development.

Based on the reviewed studies, it can be concluded that social media itself is not the primary problem; rather, the manner and frequency of its use determine its impact on teenagers' health and sleeping habits. Encouraging adolescents to establish healthy digital routines and practise responsible social media use can significantly reduce sleep-related problems.

Future research may further investigate effective strategies for promoting digital well-being among teenagers, including educational programmes, parental guidance, and technological interventions aimed at improving healthy sleep habits while maintaining the benefits that social media offers in modern society.

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