

The Impact of Social Media on Sleep Quality and Mental Health of Teenagers

In the current modern era of media, teenagers have made technology, specifically social media, an integral part of their lives, using it for communicating with friends, consuming media, and expressing themselves. While social media offers many different benefits, the excessive use of social media poses many different risks to the sleep quality and mental health of teenagers. Throughout this essay, we will discuss the links between social media, the disturbance of sleep, and mental health issues in teenagers using recent studies relating to the question.

Social Media and Sleep Quality

The excessive use of social media among teenagers has raised concerns about its impact on sleep quality. Research by Masoed, Omar, and Magd (2021) highlights a strong connection between addiction to social media and poor sleep quality. Their study found that young adults who had begun to or had already developed social media addictions reported having unsatisfactory sleep quality, adding on to this more than three-quarters of those tested reported having a low satisfaction level towards life. These findings align with the findings found in the systematic review done by Alonzo et al. (2021), which identifies poor sleep quality as a mediator between high social media use and poor mental health outcomes, such as anxiety and depression. The review emphasises that by aiming to improve one's sleeping quality it would begin to mitigate some of the negative mental health conditions linked to social media addiction/heavy social media use.(Alonzo et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Woods and Scott (2016) found that adolescents with higher social media use report poorer sleep quality, which in turn is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Their study suggests that the use of social media, particularly before going to bed or sleep, disrupts sleep patterns due to the blue light admitted from a device and aids in creating low-quality insufficient sleep. This lack of restful deep sleep causes the body to begin to develop mental health issues, creating a vicious cycle where teenagers and young adults with poor mental health state will turn to social media for comfort, further harming their sleep quality.

The Psychological Impact of Social Media

The psychological impact of social media on teenagers is extremely interesting. Social media platforms often show images of unrealistic lifestyles and body standards, which can lead to feelings of distastefulness with the lives of young adults by making comparisons to these online creators. Masoed et al. (2021) state that, excessive social media use can lead to a feeling of low satisfaction with one's life, as teenagers already struggle with self-esteem issues and the pressure to live their lives the same way that it is portrayed on social media, you begin to see where the issue is coming from. This is supported by Woods and Scott

(2016), who found that higher social media use is linked to poor self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.

The systematic review done by Alonzo ET AL. (2021) further explores the psychological impact of social media, indicating that too much use of social media is often linked to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. The review suggests that social media use can lead to a decline in mental health through several factors, including the disruption of sleep, a high amount of cyberbullying, and the negative comparisons found in social media. Teenagers who spend a larger than normal amount of time on social media are more likely to experience these issues, further highlighting the need to promote healthy social media use to improve mental health among teenagers.

Social Media, Sleep, and Mental Health: A Complex Interplay

The relationship between social media use, sleep quality, and mental health is one of a complex nature. Research by Scott, Biello, and Woods (2019) indicates that social media use can directly affect sleep quality through things such as blue light exposure from screens, which delays the release of melatonin and disrupts the amount of time needed to reach deep sleep. This disruption can lead to difficulty falling asleep, reduced sleep duration, and poor sleep quality, all of which contribute to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Scott, Biello, & Woods, 2019).

Continuing, the constant notifications that come from social media can lead to sleep disturbances and increased stress levels. Teens may feel as though they need to stay connected and respond to messages, even late at night. This phenomenon is called 'FOMO' (fear of missing out). This 'FOMO' leads to sleep fragmentation and poor sleep quality. The constant connection to their social media can also contribute to feelings of anxiety and overwhelm, as teenagers will struggle to balance their lives online and their in-person, face-to-face lives.

The relationship between sleep and mental health is well-documented, with poor sleep quality often leading to increased mental stress, and vice versa. For instance, a study by Hale and Guan (2015) found that adolescents with poor sleep quality are more likely to experience mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. This relationship suggests that actions taken to improve the sleep quality of these teenagers could also have a positive impact on their mental health.

Strategies for Mitigating the Impact of Social Media

Addressing the impact of social media on sleep quality and mental health requires an approach that involves parents, teachers, and healthcare providers. One effective strategy is to promote healthy social media use among teenagers by setting boundaries and encouraging offline activities. Parents can play a crucial role by setting limits on screen time, particularly before bedtime, taking the devices away from their kids before they go into their rooms so they have no urge whatsoever, and promoting healthy sleep habits.

Teachers can also contribute by introducing mental health education into the curriculum, helping students understand the potential risks associated with excessive social media use,

and teaching them strategies to manage their social media use. Schools can implement programs that promote positive use of these platforms and provide resources for students struggling with mental health issues related to social media use, such as counselors or therapists.

Finally, spreading awareness and education about the potential impact of social media on sleep and mental health can help teenagers to make informed choices about their online presence and behavior. Providing resources and support for teens to develop resilience can also help mitigate the negative effects of social media.

Conclusion

The overuse of social media among teenagers poses significant risks to sleep quality and mental health. Research indicates that excessive social media use is linked to poor sleep quality, which in turn is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. By promoting healthy social media habits, setting boundaries, and providing education and support, we can help teenagers navigate the complex world of social media and protect their sleep quality and mental health.

References

Alonzo, R., Hussain, J., Stranges, S., & Anderson, K. K. (2021). Interplay between social media use, sleep quality, and mental health in youth: A systematic review. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*. Retrieved from

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S108707922030157X>

Hale, L., & Guan, S. (2015). Screen time and sleep among school-aged children and adolescents: A systematic literature review. *BMJ Open*, 5(2), e006748.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-006748>

Masoed, E. S., Omar, R., & Magd, A. (2021). Social media addiction among adolescents: its relationship to sleep quality and life satisfaction. *International Journal of ...* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amna-Aboelmagd/publication/352558153_Social_media_addiction_among_adolescents_Its_relationship_to_sleep_quality_and_life_satisfaction/links/60cfe87f458515dc17993a76/Social-media-addiction-among-adolescents-Its-relationship-to-sleep-quality-and-life-satisfaction.pdf

Scott, H., Biello, S. M., & Woods, H. C. (2019). Social media use and adolescent sleep patterns: Evidence from a systematic review. *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 40, 86-94.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2020.101414>

Woods, H. C., & Scott, H. (2016). #Sleepyteens: Social media use in adolescence is associated with poor sleep quality, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. *Journal of Adolescence*. Retrieved from

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140197116300343>