The impact of social networking sites use on health-related outcomes among UK adolescents

# Details

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## Topics

## Sample

11,406 adolescents (13–15 years old) from the 2015-16 sweep of the Millennium Cohort Study

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

Other

# Abstract

This study theorizes on and examines the impact of social networking sites (SNS) use on health outcomes in
adolescents. By using data from the 2015-16 sweep of the Millennium Cohort Study, SNS use and its effects on
sleep duration, healthy eating (fruits/vegetables intake, eating breakfast), and self-rated health was evaluated in
11,406 adolescents (13–15 years old). For this, a model was constructed and tested with the PROCESS macro in
SPSS. Daily SNS use time was found to be negatively associated with general health; and this effect was fully
mediated through decreased sleep duration and reduced healthy eating. Females had a higher risk of being
negatively affected by the extent of their SNS use, compared to males. These findings contribute to the understanding
of potential social media use effects on adolescents. They further show that established sex differences in
sleep hygiene and healthy eating, which have been explained from the psychological and physiological
perspective in prior research, can also stem, in part, from differences in social media use patterns. From a practical
standpoint, strategies aimed at helping adolescents manage their sleep hygiene and healthy food intake despite
their SNS use may be more fruitful than those aimed at assisting them to curb their social media use.

# Outcome

"The results show that the overall effect of SNS use on adolescents’ general health is fully
mediated through their sleeping and eating behavior, and that sleeping also affects eating habits. The effect of SNS on health is stronger for female than for male adolescent users" (Serenko et al., 2021: 7). "First, it was confirmed that the use of SNS is associated with shorter
sleep duration for both male and female adolescents – adolescents who
use SNS more tend to go to sleep later and/or wake up earlier (this is how
sleep duration was operationalized in this study)... The relationship between SNS use and sleep duration was found to be
stronger for females than for males... Second, the findings indicate that SNS use has a negative association
with healthy eating behavior, and this relationship is stronger (more
negative) for female adolescents... Third, adequate sleep duration and healthy eating behavior are
positively associated with good health... it was discovered that the negative
impact of SNS use on adolescents’ general health level is fully mediated
through sleep duration and healthy eating. This shows that by itself, SNS
use does not directly affect adolescents’ health. Instead, it is the consequences
of heavy SNS use, including insufficient sleep and unhealthy
eating, that deteriorate adolescents’ general health level. This suggests
that special attention should be paid to the mediating factors triggered by
SNS overuse that negatively affect adolescents’ general health." (Serenko et al., 2021: 5-6).