Social Media Use and Adolescents’ Sleep: A Longitudinal Study on the Protective Role of Parental Rules Regarding Internet Use before Sleep

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## Topics

## Sample

"The data for this study were derived from the Digital Youth Project, a longitudinal
research project on adolescents’ online behavior. Specifically, we used data from two
measurement waves conducted in February 2017 and 2018 (T3 and T4 in the original
project, in this study, referred to as T1 and T2), as some variables of interest were not
included in the questionnaire in the first two waves of the original study. Adolescents from
six different secondary schools completed a computer-based questionnaire during school
hours. Research assistants were present to supervise the data collection, answer student
questions, and ensure maximum privacy.
Of the 2708 participants included at T1, 678 dropped out of the study due to withdrawal
of one of the six schools. Of the remaining 2030 participants, 1422 (70%) also
participated at T2. Further dropout of participants was mainly due to dropout of complete
classes (particularly last classes of lower-level secondary education) because schools did
not provide permission for these specific classes, or, to a lesser extent, absence of individual
students during the measurement days. Nine adolescents were excluded because of
unreliable data, resulting in a final sample of 2021 participants eligible for analysis. More
than half of the final sample was male (54.6%), and the age ranged from 11 to 17 years
(Mage = 13.86, SD = 1.25) at T1. Students were in lower-level vocational education (42.2%), moderate level secondary education (11.8%), or high school/pre-university education (46.1%). Most students (95.4%) had a Dutch background." (van den Eijnden et al., 2021, p. 1349)

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

# Abstract

The popularity of social media use among adolescents has raised concerns about the potentially harmful effects of social media use on adolescents’ sleep. Since longitudinal research considering this relationship is scarce, the present two-wave longitudinal study of 2021 secondary school students (Mage = 13.86, SD = 1.25) examined whether frequency of social media use and problematic social media use predicted adolescents’ bedtime and quality of sleep. Moreover, the protective role of parental rules regarding Internet and smartphone use one hour before sleep was examined. The findings indicated that strict parental rules about Internet and smartphone use before sleep might prevent negative consequences of social media use on bedtime and sleep quality, but only among less engaged social media users. Once adolescents are highly engaged social media users, strict parental rules do not seem to prevent negative media influences on sleep. This implies that limiting Internet accessibility before bedtime can help prevent adolescents’ sleep problems, but that regulation is less effective for adolescents who are already highly involved in social media use.

# Outcome

"The longitudinal findings imply that more
frequent use of social media and more problematic social media use predicted a later
bedtime among adolescents one year later. However, the effects of frequency of social
media use and problematic social media use on bedtime depended on the rules that parents
set, i.e., strict parental rules on the Internet and smartphone use before going to sleep
predicted an earlier bedtime, but only among adolescents who scored below average on the
frequency of social media use and/or problematic social media use. In a similar vein, strict
parental rules regarding Internet use in the hour before sleep predicted a better quality of
sleep, but only among adolescents who scored below average on the frequency of social
media use and/or problematic social media use. Among adolescents who used social
media more frequently or reported more problematic social media use, strict parental rules
did not predict a better quality of sleep and, therefore, did not prevent negative media
influences on sleep." (van den Eijnden et al., 2021, p. 1353)