

Publication

Adolescents' electronic media use at night, sleep disturbance, and depressive symptoms in the smartphone age

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Adolescence is a time of increasing vulnerability for poor mental health, including depression. Sleep disturbance is an important risk factor for the development of depression during adolescence. Excessive electronic media use at night is a risk factor for both adolescents' sleep disturbance and depression. To better understand the interplay between sleep, depressive symptoms, and electronic media use at night, this study examined changes in adolescents' electronic media use at night and sleep associated with smartphone ownership. Also examined was whether sleep disturbance mediated the relationship between electronic media use at night and depressive symptoms. 362 adolescents (12-17 year olds, M = 14.8, SD = 1.3; 44.8 % female) were included and completed questionnaires assessing sleep disturbance (short sleep duration and sleep difficulties) and depressive symptoms. Further, participants reported on their electronic media use in bed before sleep such as frequency of watching TV or movies, playing video games, talking or text messaging on the mobile phone, and spending time online. Smartphone ownership was related to more electronic media use in bed before sleep, particularly calling/sending messages and spending time online compared to adolescents with a conventional mobile phone. Smartphone ownership was also related to later bedtimes while it was unrelated to sleep disturbance and symptoms of depression. Sleep disturbance partially mediated the relationship between electronic media use in bed before sleep and symptoms of depression. Electronic media use was negatively related with sleep duration and positively with sleep difficulties, which in turn were related to depressive symptoms. Sleep difficulties were the more important mediator than sleep duration. The results of this study suggest that adolescents might benefit from education regarding sleep hygiene and the risks of electronic media use at night.

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