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Internet And Sleep Hygiene: Impact On Youth Health

Jalolov N.N

Tashkent State Medical University

Islomxonova F.O

Tashkent State Medical University

Gulmurodova J.O

Tashkent State Medical University

Umirova E.Y

Tashkent State Medical University

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the role of modern digital technologies, particularly the Internet, in the lifestyle of young people and its interrelation with sleep hygiene. While the educational and communicative opportunities of the Internet positively influence the intellectual development of youth, excessive and uncontrolled use may lead to sleep disturbances, as supported by scientific sources and observations. In particular, prolonged screen exposure at night can reduce melatonin secretion, disrupt the biological clock, and negatively affect cognitive and physical performance. The article also highlights the fundamental principles of sleep hygiene and their importance for youth health, psychological stability, and academic performance. Hygienic recommendations for the rational use of the Internet and maintaining proper sleep hygiene are provided. The study results demonstrate the relevance and practical significance of hygiene sciences in promoting a healthy lifestyle among young people.

Keywords:

Internet, sleep, youth, hygiene, digital health.

Introduction. Youth is generally defined as the period between 15 and 24 years of age, a critical stage in human life characterized by profound neurobiological, physical, behavioral, and emotional changes. This period is particularly vulnerable, posing significant risks for the development of sleep disturbances and mental health problems. Epidemiological studies indicate that in many countries, more than half of adolescents sleep less than the recommended 8 hours on school days, with a portion experiencing symptoms of insomnia. Prolonged and severe sleep deprivation not only exacerbates individual psychological distress but also increases the risk of psychiatric disorders and contributes to negative behaviors such as substance use and risky driving. Moreover, scientific sources report that approximately 70–75% of all mental disorders

first manifest during adolescence, underscoring the relevance of this issue.

Factors contributing to poor sleep hygiene and impaired mental health are diverse and may include gender differences, excessive academic workload, insufficient physical activity, and overall health status. However, in recent years, social media use (SMU) has been increasingly recognized as a major risk factor. Adolescents face a critical need to form personal identity, gain acceptance among peers, and find their place in social groups. In this context, social networks serve as a convenient tool. Statistical data indicate that over 80% of adolescents use electronic devices in the evening before sleep. On one hand, this provides opportunities for peer communication, self-expression, and psychological support; on the other hand, excessive use can impair sleep quality, increase exposure to cyberbullying, reinforce gender

stereotypes, promote self-objectification, and lead to encounters with violent or inappropriate content.

The relationship between social media use, sleep, and mental health remains complex and produces sometimes contradictory results. Some studies indicate a strong association, while others find no significant link. In some cases, a bidirectional effect is observed: excessive social media use worsens sleep quality, while adolescents who sleep poorly may, in turn, use electronic devices to facilitate sleep. Additionally, the “Fear of Missing Out” (FOMO) syndrome compels adolescents to remain online longer, further exacerbating their psychological vulnerability.

Thus, studying the interrelation between social media use, sleep hygiene, and mental health among youth is an urgent issue. Scientific exploration of this problem is crucial for promoting a healthy lifestyle, developing responsible digital behavior, and implementing effective hygienic preventive measures for adolescents.

Materials and Methods.

Impact of Digital Technologies on Mental Health

Materials:

1. *Measuring Digital Addiction:* Several standardized tests are used to assess dependence on digital technologies, including:
 - Internet Addiction Test (IAT): Developed by Koi (1998), this test measures individuals’ addiction to the Internet.
 - Smartphone Addiction Scale (SAS): Used to evaluate addiction to mobile phones.
2. *Measuring Mental Health:*
 - Beck Depression Inventory (BDI): Used to measure the level of depression.
 - Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7): Used to assess anxiety levels.
 - Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): Used to evaluate stress levels.

Digital Addiction and Online Counseling:

Impact of Digital Addiction:

To study the impact of digital addiction on mental health, the most commonly used methods include:

Longitudinal Study: This method is used to examine the long-term effects of digital technologies on individuals’ mental states. For example, tracking levels of depression and anxiety over time among individuals addicted to the Internet.

Table 1. Effects of Digital Addiction

Type of Consequence	Percentage	Notes
Decreased attention	42%	Difficulty focusing in class, quick fatigue
Stress and anxiety	35%	Due to FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)
Weakened immunity	18%	Sleep deprivation weakens the body
Reduced learning efficiency	47%	Lack of sleep negatively affects the learning process

Main Section.

The Relationship Between the Internet and Sleep Hygiene

Although the Internet has become an integral part of young people’s lives in modern society, its impact on their sleep hygiene is attracting increasing attention from researchers. A large-scale study conducted in Canada found that high social media activity was directly associated with symptoms of insomnia among adolescents.[1] In particular, the duration of sleep reduction was observed to significantly decrease daytime functioning and learning efficiency in youth.

Similarly, research conducted in China indicates that disturbances in sleep hygiene are

widespread among adolescents. About half of the participants (56.5%) reported sleeping less than 8 hours per day, which poses a serious risk to normative physiological development.[2] Researchers associate this with the habit of using electronic devices and social media platforms late in the evening. The “blue light” emitted from screens suppresses melatonin secretion and disrupts circadian rhythms. Numerous other studies also confirm that using mobile devices before bedtime delays sleep onset, reduces sleep quality, and sometimes makes it difficult to fall asleep altogether.[3] Consequently, adolescents experience difficulty concentrating the next day, decreased academic

performance, and increased emotional instability.

Sleep Hygiene Disruption and Youth Health

Chronic sleep disruption has a profound negative impact on adolescent health. Sleep deprivation impairs the stable transmission of neural impulses in the brain, weakens memory processes, and reduces decision-making ability. Studies indicate that insomnia increases the risk of anxiety, depression, and impulsive behaviors in adolescents up to twofold.[2]

Additionally, the widely observed “Fear of Missing Out” (FOMO) syndrome is a major factor disrupting sleep hygiene. Adolescents constantly strive to stay online on social networks, consequently delaying sleep. Prolonged FOMO leads to chronic stress on the nervous system, elevated stress hormones (cortisol), and emotional instability. Disrupted sleep hygiene also affects physical health: it weakens the immune system, increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, contributes to obesity, and impairs metabolic processes. This demonstrates that Internet use and poor sleep hygiene constitute not only psychological but also broader biomedical problems.

Positive Aspects of the Internet and Its Dual Effects

Viewing the Internet and social networks solely from a negative perspective is one-sided. When used in moderation, they play a positive role in youth personal development. Social

media, for instance, provides opportunities for self-expression, peer communication, knowledge acquisition, and showcasing creative abilities.[1] Some studies even suggest that social media enhances adolescents’ self-confidence and serves as a source of psychological support.

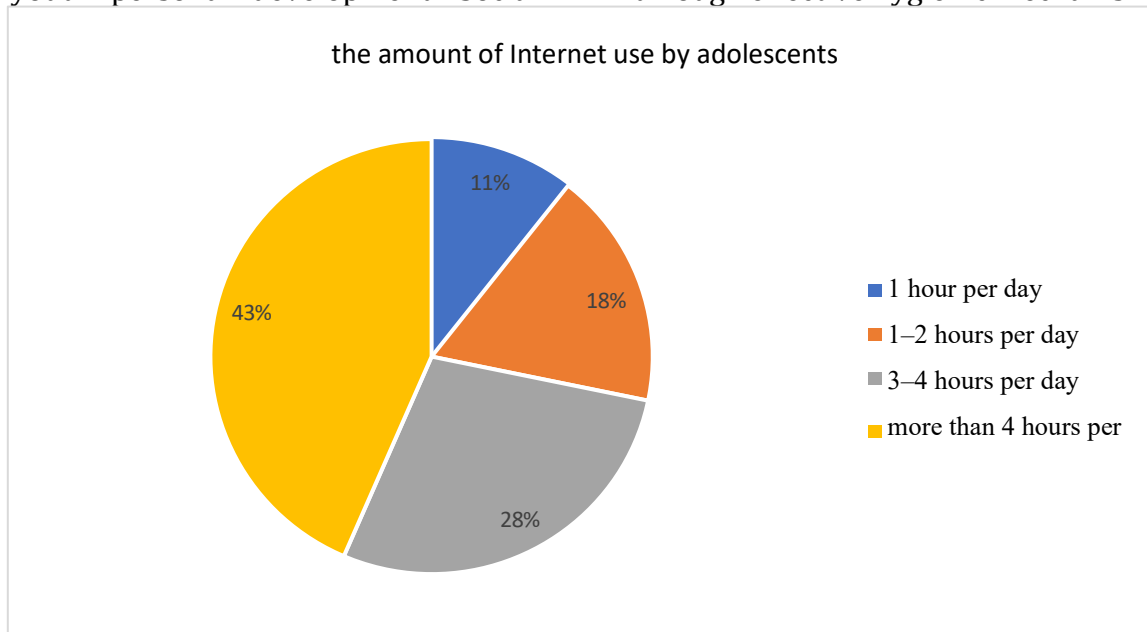
Thus, the Internet has a dual effect: it can be beneficial when used in healthy amounts, but uncontrolled and late-night use can severely impair sleep hygiene.

Preventive and Hygienic Measures

Based on scientific evidence and expert recommendations, the following measures are essential to prevent Internet- and sleep-related problems among youth:

1. Adherence to Sleep Hygiene: Limit the use of electronic devices at least 1–2 hours before bedtime.[3]
2. Technological Boundaries: Parents and teachers should monitor adolescents’ Internet usage, but this should be implemented based on trust.[2]
3. Psychological Support: Expand counseling centers for adolescents showing signs of FOMO and digital addiction.
4. Healthy Alternatives: Encourage participation in sports, cultural events, and social activities to engage youth in productive offline activities.

By promoting a culture of responsible Internet use, we can protect youth health through effective hygienic mechanisms.



Conclusion. Adolescent health is directly linked to the future of society, and Internet use and adherence to sleep hygiene play a crucial role. Recent research indicates that excessive late-night Internet use significantly disrupts sleep quality, weakens attention and memory processes, and negatively impacts both mental and physical health. Such disruptions affect academic performance, social relationships, and overall quality of life.

However, the Internet itself is not inherently harmful. When used in moderation and with proper hygienic considerations, it expands learning opportunities, fosters creative potential, and provides psychological support. The problem lies not in the technology itself, but in the culture of its use.

Promoting healthy sleep hygiene, monitoring Internet use, and encouraging participation in sports and cultural activities can prevent these adverse outcomes. One of the primary objectives of hygiene science is to safeguard human health in the context of technological advancement.

In conclusion, Internet use and sleep hygiene represent pressing issues in adolescent health. Addressing them requires collaboration among healthcare professionals, parents, educators, society, and policymakers. Only through such coordinated efforts can we raise a healthy, knowledgeable, and responsible generation.

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