The Effects of Social Media on Sleep Deprivation in College Students
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Sleep deprivation, more specifically defined as the inability to obtain adequate sleep to support daily alertness, affects over seventy percent of college age students (Hershner & Chervin, 2014). In addition, over seventy million people in the United States report sleep deprivation, making it a common and well known health concern (Babson, Trainor, Feldner, & Blumenthal, 2010). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends eight hours of sleep a night for young adults (2013). In addition, Hershner & Chervin (2014) found the average sleep duration of a college student to be 5.7 hours a night. This is clearly far below what is considered an adequate amount of sleep. Hershner and Chervin (2014) also reported college students to pull an average of 2.7 “all-nighters” per month. There are many factors contributing to sleep deprivation in college age students. This research aims to understand one of these factors, social media.

The way college students use social media continues to grow. The majority of teachers and universities have converted to e-text or online books. Students are told to turn in assignments and to communicate all through the internet. Discussions are posted using online blogs and students constantly use Facebook to share information about certain clubs and organizations. Of college students, 79% agree internet use has had a positive impact on their college experience (Jones, 2008). Even in the absence of school, college students have become enthralled with the idea of social media. College students use the means of social media to connect with friends and family all over the world. Beginning with the first Myspace then Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, which are the most popular sites used (Thuseethan & Kuhana, 2014). As of today, Facebook is the most prevalent source of social media use (Gettman & Cortijo, 2015). Facebook had 100 million users who spent more than 20 minutes per day in 2008 (Thuseethan & Kuhana, 2014). Also, the ability to access Facebook has become easier since the
cellphone application. Now just from the click of a button someone can view any Facebook at any time. This simple accessibility has only increased the amount of social media use among college age students.

Such proliferation of social media through handheld and other portable devices causes concern when paired with individuals entering adulthood. At this point in life, adolescences struggle with time management because of activities such as school and/or work. This is a time when sleep and social interaction become even more crucial as well. This research study primarily aims to provide some clarification as to the connection between the use of social media, specifically Facebook, and sleep deprivation in college students ages eighteen to twenty four. The rapid development of technology, for example cell phones, tablets, and laptops, allows for websites such as Facebook to become more accessible. However, it also causes a focus on schoolwork and other essentially healthy activities to become poorly prioritized; therefore, increasing the time that a student takes to perform an activity.

The concerns behind this study are as follows: What is the extent to which social media use begins to disrupt a healthy lifestyle? Is this a main cause of sleep deprivation? How much use of social media sites, like Facebook, is too much use? The majority of the existing data regarding college aged students and social media use focuses on academic achievement and grade point average (Jena, 2014). Most of the preexisting studies on social media use focus on the adolescent population, who have different physiological sleep patterns than college age students, having already gone through puberty (Kuehnle, Pramstaller, Ricken, Havel, Guth, & Merrow, 2004). Other sleep studies conducted have focused on the presentation of electronic media in the bedroom rather than the use of social media at night (Fossum, Nordnes, Storemark, Bjorvant & Pallesen, 2013). A further limitation is that a number of studies have assessed the frequency of electronic media use rather than the duration. We are mainly interested in looking at the use of one form of social media, Facebook, instead of social media as a
whole. The data on this topic is lacking, which provides us with a unique opportunity to conduct our own survey on a University’s campus.

Based on previous research conducted on this topic, it has been predicted that social media use can be associated with sleep deprivation. If an individual spends more time using social media, especially right before going to bed, then they are less likely to get an adequate amount of restful sleep. College students ages 18-24 do not generally get the recommended amount of sleep. Social media use is predicted to be a main cause of this. Based on our findings in these studies we hypothesize that students who spend excess hours on social media sites get less sleep throughout the week. It is crucial to understand that a lot more research needs to be done in this field in order to make accurate assumptions with the relationships between social networking and social deprivation amongst college students.

Therefore the purpose of this research study is to become more familiar with how social media affects sleep deprivation so that efforts can be made to reduce its negative impact. Many questions arose while originally discussing the questionnaire. Do these students feel sleep deprived throughout the week? Is school work being affected due to sleep deprivation from excess social media use? Are college students checking their social media sites first thing in the morning and is checking social media sites the last thing they do at night? Essentially, the questionnaire focuses on each student’s own ideas about their ability to balance sleep with their use of social media, as well as their ability when it comes to the other activities that commonly affect their lives.
References


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