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Dr. Hoshiyar Singh

Associate Professor,
JSPG College, Sikandrabad,
Bulandshahar, Uttar Pradesh,
India

The impact of media on youth mental health status

Dr. Hoshiyar Singh

Abstract

Youth spend an average of 4 to 6 hours/day using media, and the vast majority of them have access to a bedroom television, computer, the Internet, a video-game console, and a cell phone. The purpose of the present study is to highlight the effects of media on the health and playing well-being of children and adolescents sportspersons, and media can provide information about safe health practices and can foster social connectedness.

The technology landscape has rapidly evolved in recent years, with social media now playing a central role in the lives of youth. Social media has created both significant new challenges and exciting opportunities. Research is beginning to uncover how specific social media experiences may influence youth mental health.

However, recent evidence raises concerns about media's effects on aggression, sexual behaviour, substance use, disordered eating, health and change behaviour and academic education and sports skills sports. We provide recommendations for parents, practitioners, the media, and policy makers, among others, for ways to increase the benefits and reduce the harm that media can have for the developing child and for healthy life.

Keywords: Media, Health risks, Youths, Social Media

Introduction

More than 50 years of media research attests to the significant influence of media on sports person health. Both “old” media (television, movies, magazines) and “new” media (the Internet and social networking sites, video/computer games, cell phones) can have an impact on virtually every health concern that practitioners and parents have about young people, including aggressive behaviour, risky sexual behaviour, substance use, and disordered eating.

Children spend more time with media than they do in any other activity except for sleeping an average of 4 to 5 hours/day. Children's bedrooms are replete with media technology. Two thirds had a television set, one half had a DVD player or video-game console, and nearly one third had Internet access or a computer.

Media impact is increased significantly with the presence of a bedroom television: viewing increases 2 to 3 hours/day, risk of overweight increases and the likelihood of smoking doubles. When a television is in the bedroom, parents are less able to monitor viewing habits children participate in fewer activities such as reading and hobbies, and sleep is shortened.

Digital technologies have become a universal feature of young people's lives. Exposure to screens begins early in life for many youth, with children under age two spending an average of 42 minutes per day with screen media. By the time youth reach adolescence, most are fully immersed in a world of smartphones, computers, and social media. Today's youth have unprecedented access to new media and use them in expected and unexpected ways. Recent research by the Pew Internet and American Life Project revealed that 93% of youth aged 8 to 18 are online. Teens can download violent videos, send sexual text messages or explicit self-photographs to their friends, buy cigarettes and beer on the Internet, and post enticing profiles. Digital media have become an important source of information and sometimes misinformation, about health problems. The Internet is often used as a mechanism for bullying and harassing. The pervasiveness of new media has created an increasingly complex environment for youth, parents, health care providers, and policymakers to navigate. Indeed, while this media environment has introduced numerous new challenges and risks for youth mental health, so too has it presented considerable benefits and opportunities.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Hoshiyar Singh

Associate Professor,
JSPG College, Sikandrabad,
Bulandshahar, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Table 1: Time spent with various media in a typical day among youths

Media type	Hours: Minutes
Television	4:29
On a television set	3:28
On the Internet	0:24
On an iPod/MP3 player	0:16
On a cell phone	0:15
On a computer (DVD/video)	0:06
Music	2:19
iPod/MP3 player	0:41
Radio	0:32
Computer	0:32
On a cell phone	0:17
Compact disc	0:17
Print	0:38
Movies (in-theatre)	0:25
Computer	1:29
Social networking	0:22
Games (on-and offline)	0:17
Video sites	0:15
Instant messaging	0:11
Email	0:05
Other websites	0:11
Other	0:08
Video games (not online or on computers)	1:13
Console	0:36
Handheld device	0:21
On a cell phone	0:17
Texting	1:35
Talking on a cell phone	0:33

Source: Media in the lives of youths, January 2017.

Note: The study did not include texting and talking on a cell phone in the estimate of total time with media. Some numbers have been calculated from data tables, and some forms of media studied have been omitted from the table.

Table Description: This table presents time spent, in hours and minutes, with various media in a typical day among youth.

Violence and aggression: By the age of 18, the average adolescent will have seen an estimated 200-1000 acts of violence on television alone. Much of the violence on television and in movies is presented in a sanitized and glamorized fashion, and in children's programming it often is presented as humorous. More than 10% of 10 to 14 year olds saw 40 of the most violent movies in 2010. Both music videos and rap music have become increasingly violent.

Sex: The impact of exposure to sexual content in media on adolescent sexual beliefs and early sexual initiation has found modest but significant associations, particularly in the realm of pornography. In a national sample of 1500 10 to 17 year olds, nearly half of the Internet users had been exposed to on-line pornography. In middle-school youth, exposure to sexually explicit content predicted perpetration of sexual harassment more permissive sexual norms, having oral sex, and engaging in sexual intercourse while in high school.

Substance use: Children and teenagers can also see considerable alcohol and drug content in on-line videos. Recent studies of social networking sites have found that substance abuse is referenced in 40% of the profiles. Portrayals of tobacco are also prevalent in the movies. Movies made today contain smoking and smoking is rarely associated with negative health outcomes.

Obesity and eating disorders: media use is contributing to

the current epidemic of obesity worldwide. However, the mechanism for why heavy television-viewing, in particular, is predictive of children's weight status is unclear. Food marketing may be 1 culprit. Children and teenagers see 4400–7600 ads per year for junk food and fast food on television alone. Randomized, controlled experiments have provided evidence that exposure to junk food advertising has an impact on children's food beliefs and preferences.

The possibility of a connection between television-viewing and ADD or other learning disabilities is currently an issue of great controversy. An initial study in 2004 revealed an association between daily hours of television-viewing at the ages of 1 to 2 years and subsequent attention problems at the age of 7. Media impact on academic performance, especially if there is a television set in the child's or teenager's bedroom.

Adolescence and the media landscape

Today's media landscape is larger and more diverse than ever before, with youth having access to an unprecedented volume of digital content across numerous devices, including smartphones, tablets, computers, laptops, and gaming consoles. Social media represents a central component of this landscape. Broadly, social media is defined as any digital tools or applications that allow users to interact socially, and can be distinguished from traditional media (e.g., television) by the fact that users can both consume and create content. Under this broad definition “social media” may include social networking sites (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok), text messaging and messaging apps, social gaming tools, YouTube, and more. Any comprehensive understanding of contemporary adolescents' mental health requires a consideration of the role of social media.

Adolescence represents a period of heightened risk for the onset of mental illness with nearly 1 in 5 adolescents suffering from a diagnosable mental disorder. Notably, the incidence of certain mental health concerns, such as depression and suicide, have increased significantly among adolescents in recent years, with rates of suicide among youth aged 10-24 increasing 56% from 2007 to 2017. Given that this increase has coincided with the widespread adoption of social media, this has led to concerns regarding a potential link. In addition, technology use tends to increase over the course of childhood, with adolescents using new media and social media in particular at higher rates and with greater frequency than younger children. Nearly all adolescents aged 13-17 use some form of social media, with the most popular sites currently being YouTube (85%), Instagram (72%), Snapchat (69%) and Facebook (51%) however, new platforms are frequently introduced, with some (i.e., TikTok), quickly gaining traction among young people.

Understanding the impact of social media on youth mental health

Research on social media and adolescent mental health has proliferated in recent years, with many studies exploring whether more frequent use of social media is associated with various mental health concerns, including depression, body image concerns and disordered eating, and externalizing problems. In general, findings from these studies have been mixed, with many revealing a small but significant negative effect of social media use on mental health. A growing body of work now seeks to build on these studies with more nuanced investigations of how, why, and for whom social media use may have positive or negative effects on youth development. Social media comprises a vast array of digital

tools, and thus characterizing its overall effect on youth remains challenging. First, it is important to understand individual strengths and vulnerabilities that may predispose certain adolescents to engage with and respond to social media in adaptive or maladaptive ways. In addition, it is critical to identify how specific social media behaviors or experiences may put adolescents at risk.

Potential benefits of social media for adolescent mental health

While much of the narrative surrounding new media use among adolescents has emphasized potential risks, the unique features of the social media environment have also created new opportunities for promoting adolescents' mental health. In general, there is a range of potential benefits associated with social media use, including possibilities for humor and entertainment, identity exploration, and creative expression. One of the most clearly established benefits of social media use is that of social connection, with 81% of teens reporting that social media allows them to feel more connected to their friends. In a recent nationally representative survey, 77% of adolescents reported that social media was at least "somewhat" important for keeping up with friends on a day-to-day basis, and 69% reported it to be at least somewhat important for having meaningful conversations with close friends. Adolescents frequently cite connecting with friends and family as a primary positive aspect of social media, and prior work generally shows that social media use promotes individuals' well-being when it is used to advance a sense of acceptance or belonging.

The commitment of new media for promoting adolescent mental health goes beyond its day-to-day use among youth to include novel health care applications in screening, treatment, and prevention. In regard to screening, prior work has demonstrated the potential feasibility of reviewing social media pages for signs of depression or substance abuse. On a larger scale, increasingly sophisticated machine learning algorithms have been developed to detect social media-based signals of mental illness, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sociality. Social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram have already implemented screening and intervention procedures when users exhibit signs of emotional distress or suicide risk.

In school

Schools have not kept pace with modern media, especially in violence prevention, drug prevention, and sex education programs. With the amount of sexual suggestiveness currently displayed on television and in movies, schools no longer have any excuse for not providing comprehensive school-based sex education programs for children and adolescents, including full discussions.

Suggestions

To parents

Limit total screen time for children older than 2 years to no more than 1 to 2 hours/day. Avoid screen time for children younger than 2 years, keep children's bedrooms free of screen media; and co-view media with their children.

Conclusion

During the past 50 years, thousands of research studies have revealed that the media can be a powerful teacher of children and adolescents and have a profound impact on their health. To date, too little has been done by parents, health care

practitioners, schools, the entertainment industry, or the government to protect children and adolescents from harmful media effects and to maximize the powerfully prosaically aspects of modern media. More research is needed, but sufficient data exist to warrant both concern and increased action.

Over the past two decades, new media have established an increasingly central presence in the lives of youth, presenting both new challenges and new opportunities. An emerging body of research has begun to identify social media experiences that may contribute to adolescents' mental health. However, more research is needed as the digital media landscape continues to rapidly evolve. Much of the existing research has relied on self-report measures of adolescent media use, and has been conducted at a single time point, preventing any definitive conclusions regarding whether media use precedes and predicts mental health outcomes or vice versa.

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