Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth and young adults in the US.\(^3\) Research supports the notion that adolescents with sleep problems are at a higher risk for suicide than other young adults who receive adequate amounts of sleep. Young adults with insomniaic tendencies have a higher suicidality risk due to the symptoms of burdensomeness and depression.\(^4\) One of the major reported reasons for sleep deprivation in young adults is the use of media and technology before falling asleep.\(^5\) The early school schedule has been contributed to being a barrier for sufficient sleep within the youth population.\(^6\) The research shows to be a correlation between suicidality and sleep deprivation in young adults. The risk of suicide in youth individuals may be reduced by increasing the average time slept by youth and adolescents across the nation.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Researchers have identified poor sleep habits as a problem that requires focused attention and they are looking to understand how sleep patterns and disturbances influence the adolescent’s mental and physical health. The recommendation for adolescents and young adults is that they get between 8-10 hours (\(^5\)) of sleep a night, yet they self-report sleeping an average of between 6.5 hours of sleep a night.\(^6\) These numbers decrease the more time they spend looking at screens (see image).\(^6\) Studies have indicated a strong link between sleep problems and increased suicidal risk.\(^6, 7, 8\) Poor sleep quality impairs executive function,\(^6, 7\) resulting in emotional outbursts and aggression, rumination,\(^6\) reduced emotional regulation, and increased impulsivity,\(^6, 7, 8\) all of which contribute to risky behavior.\(^6\) This correlation suggests that addressing poor sleep hygiene in the target population may be an important tool for arresting current suicidal trends.\(^9, 10, 11\)

It is important to note that sleep problems are not the only risk factor for suicidal behavior, but sleep disturbances do tend to be present across a wide range of psychiatric issues and mood disorders,\(^6, 7, 11\) More often than not, sleep problems exhibit before the suicidal thoughts and behaviors appear.\(^6\) Risk factors that contribute to sleep problems include perceived social isolation,\(^6\) perceived burdensomeness,\(^6\) ruminating on negative actions or situations,\(^6\) staying up late then getting up early,\(^7, 8\) and drinking excessive amounts of caffeine.\(^7\) Finally, looking at serotonin in the brain may be helpful when exploring this topic, because it plays a significant role in both sleep regulation and suicidal behaviors.\(^7, 11\)

The research explored in by these authors indicates that there are strong correlations between sleep disturbances and suicidal behaviors.\(^1, 3, 5, 9\) These correlations are especially evident in a population that is at higher risk for suicide, namely young adults.\(^1, 3, 5\) Some of these factors are: the biology of being awake when our body is programmed to sleep,\(^5\) morning school schedules,\(^6\) internet use or screen time,\(^5, 7\) rumination and difficulty falling asleep.\(^5\) Biologically most teenagers are programmed to fall asleep later and wake later in the morning.\(^7\) This natural cycle is affected by school start times. One local newspaper article stated that schools in 46 states have pushed back start times to address adolescent sleep deficits and that Utah should do the same.\(^1, 9\) Another factor that contributes to sleep disturbance in teenagers is social media and excessive internet use. In a very recent article published in the Journal of American Medical Association, evidence was presented that teens who are on social media for more than three hours a day also have more mental health problems manifesting in internal and external ways including depression, anxiety, aggression, and antisocial behavior.\(^7\) The methods for this study included nearly 6,600 self-reporting teens ages 12-15.

There are other studies that discuss internal processes and gives evidence of a declining trend in internalizing symptoms (feelings of anxiety, sadness) among teenagers who participated in a sleep hygiene program at their school.\(^9\) There is also strong evidence that shows time spent ruminating is correlated with greater suicidal behaviors.\(^5\) Though the correlation between sleep problems and suicidality is strong, no study could prove that sleep problems could predict suicidal behaviors or that suicidal behavior could predict sleep problems.\(^5\)

Research showing the correlation between suicide and sleep is very current, and relevant to our community. Teachers, adolescents, parents, school boards, and mental health professionals should take note of how poor sleep habits combined with too much screen time and circadian rhythms affects the suicidality of our young people and therefore the entire society.

**REFERENCES**