A Large-Scale Test of the Goldilocks Hypothesis
Quantifying the Relations Between Digital-Screen Use and the Mental Well-Being of Adolescents
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Abstract

Although the time adolescents spend with digital technologies has sparked widespread concerns that their use might be negatively associated with mental well-being, these potential deleterious influences have not been rigorously studied. Using a preregistered plan for analyzing data collected from a representative sample of English adolescents (n = 120,115), we obtained evidence that the links between digital-screen time and mental well-being are described by quadratic functions. Further, our results showed that these links vary as a function of when digital technologies are used (i.e., weekday vs. weekend), suggesting that a full understanding of the impact of these recreational activities will require examining their functionality among other daily pursuits. Overall, the evidence indicated that moderate use of digital technology is not intrinsically harmful and may be advantageous in a connected world. The findings inform recommendations for limiting adolescents' technology use and provide a template for conducting rigorous investigations into the relations between digital technology and children's and adolescents' health.