

## Correspondence

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# Correspondence to C Fitzpatrick et al. Is adolescent internet use a risk factor for the development of depression symptoms or vice-versa?

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## Dear Editor,

I have read carefully and was very interested in the article entitled ‘Is Adolescent Internet Use a Risk Factor for the Development of depression symptoms or Vice-versa?’ (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). This article explores the complex relationship between internet use and depressive symptoms in adolescents, focusing on data obtained from the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). This study is critical because it uses a longitudinal approach, which allows researchers to observe changes and trends over time. However, there are concerns regarding the sample representation in this study. Questions were raised about whether the results could be generalized to the broader adolescent population, especially considering factors such as cultural and regional differences. The study also faced methodological challenges, primarily as it relied on self-reported measurements, which can be prone to biases such as social desirability or inaccurate recall (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023).

In its findings, this study revealed a significant association between internet use and depressive symptoms, especially among adolescent girls (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). This highlights the importance of understanding the factors that contribute to adolescent mental health, especially in an increasingly digital context (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Despite the significant association, this study suggests that the causality of the relationship is complex and may need to be fully explained by existing data. External factors, such as social and environmental context, must also be considered to understand the dynamics between internet use and depression fully (Salmela-Aro, Upadaya, Hakkarainen, Lonka, & Alho, 2017).

The study also dissects essential gender differences, showing that girls are more affected than boys in this context (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). This raises important questions about what underlies such differences. Are these differences the result of social, psychological, or biological factors? Answers to these questions could have significant implications for developing interventions and policies to support adolescent mental health (Malti, Noam, Beelmann, & Sommer, 2016).

This study’s geographic and cultural context, which focused on the Quebec region, also raises questions about how these results can be generalized (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). While these findings may be relevant for the population studied, they may not apply in a different context. This factor, along with the rapid evolution of digital media and ever-changing consumption patterns, may limit the applicability of the findings in the long term (Suherlan & Okombo, 2023). New online platforms and modes of interaction are constantly emerging, each of which can have unique and different effects on adolescents’ mental health (Williams, 2019).

Finally, while this study provides valuable insights and highlights the need for public health interventions, it must give clear recommendations regarding the form of such interventions (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). The complexity and dual nature of internet use, which can have harmful and beneficial aspects, makes it difficult to formulate effective strategies. Furthermore, this study may not have considered all variables influencing the relationship between internet use and depression, such as family dynamics or socio-economic status (Lam, Jivraj, & Scholes, 2020). This confirms the need for further, more extensive and detailed research, which can accommodate the rapidly changing digital landscape and various experiences of adolescents, to lead to the development of more effective and customized interventions in improving adolescent mental health.

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