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Social Media Addiction as Predictors of Sleep Quality: Lens from University of Ibadan Athletes

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Abstract. *The research aimed at investigating the extent to which social media addiction (SMA) could predict sleep quality among athletes (SQAA) of the University of Ibadan. The study employed a descriptive correlational research design and had as its population 154 athletes from the institution. The census sampling technique was used to ensure that all athletes were part of the research. The research was guided by three questions. The theoretical basis of the research was the Self-Regulation Model (SRM) supplemented by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Data was obtained using a questionnaire made by the researchers themselves, and analysis was done using descriptive statistics. The study found that the major determinants of SQAA among the variables studied were time spent on social media (SM) (38.3%), stress (24.0%), pain (21.3%), and physical activity (12.3%). Furthermore, the results indicated that SMA caused a serious change in sleep quality (SQ), where the major effects were identified as fatigue (31.8%), poor performance (29.2%), insomnia (29.2%), and reduced sleep duration (29.2%). The most popular platforms used by athletes that affected their sleep were WhatsApp (37.7%), Instagram (29.9%), and X/Twitter (15.6%). The research concluded that SM overuse among students significantly deteriorates SQAA, leading to the obstruction of their sports performance. Consequently, it is suggested that athletes limit their social media usage, especially at night, carry out digital wellness initiatives, and set up co-support systems with the help of coaches and sports psychologists.*

Keywords: Social media, social media addiction, Sleep quality, Athletes, University students

JEL Codes: I120; I31, I310

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1. Introduction

Sleep has major effects on physical growth, emotional control, cognitive function, and quality of life. It is a necessity for health and well-being. For athletes, sleep is not just a time to relax; it is a key ingredient in their recovery and adaptation between workouts. Increasing evidence shows that athletes who sleep longer and have better sleep quality (SQ) perform better and win more competitions (Vitale *et al.*, 2021).

Sleep plays a vital role in the human body's complex processes (Vitale, 2024). The author described sleep as being instrumental in immune system modulation, hormone control, mood regulation, memory consolidation, and muscle building. Sleep is widely acknowledged as a major player that ensures peak performance, recovery and general health and well-being, with its influence spanning most of the mental and physical areas (Vitale *et al.*, 2021). The scholars also pointed out that sufficient sleep facilitates physical recovery, hormonal balance, metabolic regulation, cognitive function, the prevention of injuries and psychological health.

While sleep is important for every person, it holds particular significance for athletes (Coel *et al.*, 2022; Ekmekci & Serrano, 2022; Fry & Rehman, 2021). Learning, performance, growth and physical and mental well-being all depend on getting enough sleep. Inadequate sleep has been linked to mood swings, increased risk-taking, worse academic performance, and sleepy driving. In sports, inadequate sleep lowers immunity, impairs performance, and makes one more susceptible to weight gain (Halson, 2014). Singh *et al.* (2022) submit that sleep is perhaps the most underappreciated component of performance and health. In addition to maximising health, getting more sleep lowers the chance of disease and injury in athletes, which may improve performance through enhanced training engagement.

Sleep permits cardiac repose and facilitates cellular and tissue regeneration, promoting bodily recuperation after physical exercise. As people go through sleep phases, variations in heart rate and respiration over the night enhance cardiovascular wellness. While sleeping, the body generates cytokine hormones that assist the immune system in combating illnesses (Fry &

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Rehman, 2021). Ample hours of restorative sleep provide a robust immune system characterised by enhanced innate and adaptive immunity, effective vaccination responsiveness and less severity of allergy responses (Suni & Truong, 2023).

Sleep is essential for memory preservation and consolidation. During the practice or acquisition of new abilities, sleep facilitates memory consolidation and enhances subsequent performance. Insufficient sleep hinders the establishment and maintenance of brain pathways necessary for learning and memory formation, which are also critical for cognitive processing. Just as an exercise programme can support and improve mental health, sleep also plays a vital role in protecting the psychological well-being of athletes. Athletes who get adequate sleep tend to have better moods, less irritability and a lower risk of illnesses like depression (Abedelmalek *et al*., 2013; Singh *et al*., 2022). Sleep loss has been shown to impair cognitive function. This decline can be a serious disadvantage to athletes whose performing activities require them to have highly developed cognitive functions such as decision-making and predicting novel circumstances. Among the factors affecting sleep quality in university athletes (SQiUA), SMA has been singled out as a major problem and is the fulcrum of this study.

Social media platforms (SMP) are intended to link people all over the world, making it easier for them to interact, share, communicate and be entertained. SM is a computer-based technology that enables people to share information, learn, ideas, and perspectives through online groups and networks (Dollarhide, 2021; Quadri & Muibi, 2024). The major characteristics of social media are personalised accounts and user-generated content, which increase interactions through likes, shares, comments and conversations. Some of the widely used SMP today include Facebook (FB), TikTok (TT), YouTube, WhatsApp (WA), Telegram, Instagram (IG), Snapchat, Reddit (RD), LinkedIn, Pinterest, and X (formerly Twitter), among many others.

There are 4.76 billion SM users worldwide, which equals nearly 60% of the world's population (DataReportal, 2023). In early 2023, 94.8% of people used chat and messaging apps

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and websites, whereas SMP came in second at 94.6% (Global Web Index, 2023). The presented data show that SMU is a universal phenomenon not only among regular people but also among athletes. SM has taken over as the main tool for communication and socialisation, especially for the younger generation. If athletes can use it properly and maintain self-control, it can become a source of happiness and fulfilment for them. However, excessive SMU may detrimentally affect athletes' mental health, athletes' performance (AP), family relationships, emotional development, and even cause physical issues such as blurred vision. Such problematic use has been identified as SMA (Omokhabi *et al*., 2025).

SMA is a kind of internet addiction in which users suffer from an overwhelming desire to use SM, turning SMU into a dangerous habit (Hou *et al*., 2019). In a recent study investigating excessive SMU among federal university students in Southern Nigeria, Unachukwu, Nwankwo, and Iweanya (2023) found that most university students engage in worrisome excessive use of SM, with no significant differences based on gender or year of study.

Ayyildiz and Besler (2022) also discovered that athletes' use of SM before sleeping affects brain function. SM addiction affects athletes' lifestyle choices, connections, relationships, and buying habits (Savci & Aysan, 2017; Hawi & Samaha, 2017). Lin *et al*. (2017) identified compulsive behaviour, functional impairment, tolerance, and withdrawal as key variables of SMA. Inability to control cravings, along with anxiety and depression, predicts SMA among university athletes. This is particularly concerning given the added expectation to perform athletically in addition to the normal stresses of being a college student (Armstrong & Oomen-Early, 2009, as cited in Schaefer, 2018).

While many studies (Singh *et al*., 2022; Savci & Aysan, 2017; Hawi & Samaha, 2017) have focused on athletes generally, the present study specifically examines undergraduate athletes at the University of Ibadan (UI), a gap this research aims to address. Therefore, this study examined SMA as a predictor of SQAA at the UI.

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1.2 Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to address the following questions:

1. What are the factors that affect SQAA in UI, Nigeria?
2. What are the effects of SMA on SQAA in UI, Nigeria?
3. Which SMP most significantly affect the SQ of athletes in UI, Nigeria?

2. Literature Review

The term SQAA covers the whole subjective and objective evaluation of an athlete's sleep patterns, duration, and sleep-related experiences, and how these affect their physical and mental health, performance, and recovery. Athletes need to get good sleep because it is one of the main factors in their physical and cognitive recovery, muscle repair, immune function, and general AP.

In athletes, SQ is particularly crucial, with subjective sleep disturbance levels being higher among female and aesthetic sport athletes. Sleep disturbances in athletes are commonly associated with competition, travel, and training demands. Many athletes report low SQ before competition, and thereafter, there is often a drop in overall sleep duration and a delay in bedtime. Sleep efficiency and onset latency are also affected by competition (Gupta, Morgan & Gilchrist, 2017).

Subjective sleep disruption and insomnia symptoms are common in elite athletes, and SQ seems to be particularly sensitive before important contests, during intense training sessions, and after long-distance competition travel. Athletes who have sleep problems may experience direct effects on training and competition due to exhaustion or indirect effects due to performance anxiety connected to sleep (Biggins *et al*., 2019). There are not many controlled comparisons of athlete and non-athlete sleep, and the quality of the research addressing SQ in top athletes is often low (Gupta, Morgan & Gilchrist, 2017).

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Sleep assessment instruments may detect athletes with clinically relevant sleep issues, and mood disorders in top athletes are associated with inadequate sleep. Inadequate sleep hygiene correlates with substantial sleep disturbances in top athletes, and these disturbances are linked to increased health issues. Many athletes have inadequate sleep quantity, quality, and behaviour, with 50% of university athletes failing to fulfil sufficient sleep thresholds and some displaying clinical sleep disorders (Trecroci *et al*., 2023). In athletes, determinants of SQ include the safeguarding role of psychological strength and the adverse effects of gender, anxiety, and perceived stress (Hrozanova, Moen & Pallesen, 2019). Sleep disturbances are prevalent among elite athletes, with disrupted sleep-wake patterns and recurrent late-night sexual activity markedly affecting effectiveness (Jorquera-Aguilera *et al*., 2021).

Simpson, Gibbs, and Matheson (2017) observe that aspects of athletic performance (e.g., agility and capacity), mental performance (e.g., focus and memory), and general well-being (e.g., sickness and injury risk, weight control) are all adversely impacted by insufficient or limited sleep. Research by Kutscher and Barwick (2019) suggests that many athletes' performance benefits from increased SD. Sleep deficiency negatively affects reaction speed and decision-making, which are crucial in sports. Athletes are likely to make more mistakes and have difficulties in responding quickly if they do not sleep well (Fullagar *et al*., 2015).

Milewski *et al*. (2014) reveal that poor quality sleep is linked to an increased risk of sporting injuries as a result of decreased coordination, balance and muscle recovery. Lastella *et al*. (2015) demonstrate that athletes deprived of quality sleep usually experience higher perceived effort during training and competition; as a result, they get less motivated and perform worse. Lastella, Lovell and Sargent (2014) express that quality sleep is crucial for emotional balance and keeping mental toughness in sports. Athletes who sleep well can better manage stress and pressure.

The above studies collectively imply that enough sleep is a must for maximal AP. Nevertheless, the sleep requirements may differ among individual athletes and their specific

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sports. Lo *et al*. (2017) state that tension and stress also influence SQ in student-athletes. Student-athletes are usually pressured by family obligations, training schedules, social life, and academic demands. Worries and anxieties become the leading causes of pre-sleep cognitive arousal, thus disrupting sleep. These factors generate anxieties that result in prolonged sleep latency, early morning waking, and frequent night waking, thereby lowering SQ.

As for the relationship between SMA and SQ in athletes, Van den Bulck and Eggermont (2016) observed that SMA was correlated with poor SQiUA and heightened levels of stress and anxiety, which may further result in sleep troubles. Saadati, Mirzaei, Okhovat, and Khodamoradi (2021) discovered a connection between SMA and loneliness, which may, in turn, have an impact on SQ. Griffiths, Kuss, and Demetrovics (2014) revealed that FOMO might be a part of SMA.

SMA might interfere with sleep in several ways, considering these reports. The arousing nature of SMU will keep a person awake; consequently, sleep onset will be delayed, and total SD will be reduced (Levenson, Shensa, Sidani, Colditz & Primack, 2016). Being exposed to blue light through excessive SMU results in the suppression of melatonin production and the disruption of circadian rhythms, which ultimately affect SQ (Falbe *et al*., 2015). Research conducted by Ogunsanya, Bamgbade, and Akinsola (2016) showed that athletes who are addicted to SM have more sleep disturbances, such as waking up at night and having restless sleep, which consequently leads to poor overall SQ. Besides, the continuous checking of SM may cause anxiety and stress, which may both result in difficulties falling and staying asleep.

Sleep problems related to SMA may result in daytime drowsiness and fatigue, which, in turn, negatively affect athletes' training and performance (Gomathi, Ahmed & Kalyani, 2018). Anosike *et al*. (2024) found that the implementation of measures to lessen SMA and introduce healthy habits may be beneficial for SQAA. SMP are digital platforms that provide users with facilities for content generation and distribution, interaction with other users, and community building. These platforms have become an integral part of modern life, impacting several aspects of society,

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including but not limited to human interactions, business, the leisure industry, and activism (Omokhabi *et al*., 2025). SMP regularly display user-generated content that actively engages users by means of likes, shares, comments, and debates.

Watkins *et al*. (2021) reported the results of a study on the effects of SMU on SQ among college athletes, which was a cross-sectional type of study and the data were mainly collected through questionnaires. It was revealed by the study that a large number of respondents considered FB to be the major SMP that negatively affected their SQ. There are numerous SMPs, and each comes with its own features and focus areas. The most popular include the following: Facebook, which is a multipurpose platform that allows users to join groups, share images and videos, and interact with friends and family. WhatsApp, which refers to a free messaging app for text, voice, images, videos, and documents. X (formerly Twitter) is a microblogging platform for posting short messages or tweets. IG is a photo and video sharing platform. TT is a short-form video sharing platform (15-60 seconds). YouTube is a video-sharing platform for uploading, watching, and sharing videos. LinkedIn refers to a professional networking platform for career connections. Snapchat is a messaging app with disappearing photos and videos. Reddit is a social news and discussion website organised into subreddits. Discord refers to a communication platform for chat, voice, and video calls. Twitch is a live streaming platform for gaming and creative content, among others.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Regulation Model (SRM) and TAM

This study adopted the SRM complemented by the TAM to explain how SMA affects athletes' SQ. The SRM is based on the premise that athletes possess internal standards they strive to meet and employ various strategies to regulate their behaviour and thoughts to achieve those standards. The SRM has proven useful for understanding a wide range of athlete behaviour, including SQ.

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Sleep is essential for athletes' physical and mental recovery and significantly impacts performance. SRM posits that athletes who are successful in self-regulating their thoughts and behaviour will have a higher chance of getting good sleep. In this way, the model can have a great influence on athletes' sleep quality (SQ), as it can help them to handle the factors that affect their sleep pattern, and it is also a common model to comprehend and change health behaviour, including sleep behaviour.

One of the most popular models in the field of technology adoption is the TAM developed by Davis (1989). This model explains the processes and factors influencing the adoption and utilisation of computer technology in an organisational setting. The implementation of TAM has been quite extensive in the field of technology to understand how individuals intend to use various innovations. Furthermore, TAM illustrates that human behavioural intention relates to the use of technology (Ramayah, 2006). In fact, behavioural intention is primarily influenced by the beneficial nature and the ease of use of the system (Saade, Nebede & Tan, 2007). Therefore, TAM implies that people's attitudes towards using information technology, including the concept of "love at first sight," are largely based on their perceived utility and ease of use, which significantly influence their behavioural intentions.

Using SM at an addictive level may harm athletes' SQ, which is the focus of the present research. It is therefore necessary for athletes to strictly regulate the average time spent using SM technologies if they are to enjoy the full benefits of health and high performance in their sports activities.

3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive correlational research approach. This approach identifies connections among various factors and, at the same time, provides detailed explanations of the events (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Methodically gathering, analysing, interpreting, and presenting

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relevant facts and information helps uncover conditions that existed during certain occurrences. The population consisted of all 154 undergraduate athletes at the UI. All 154 athletes were included in the research since the census approach, often referred to as total enumeration, was used as the sample strategy. Data was gathered using a self-created questionnaire. Before being properly administered, the instrument was pretested on 20 subjects who were not part of the research. Corrections and adjustments were made to items that fell below the 0.05 significance level. The variables yielded reliability coefficients of 0.69 for SMA and 0.75 for SQ using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (charts) for the research questions.

4. Result

This section presents the findings from the data collected from 154 respondents, the data collected lasted for three months. The research questions being depicted first in Figure 1.

Research Question 1: What are the factors that affect SQAA in UI?

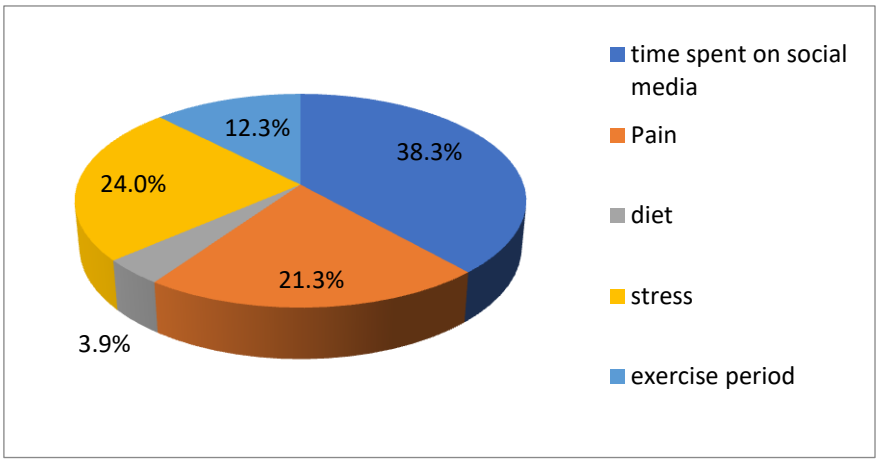

Fig. 1: Factors affecting SQ
(Researchers, 2025)

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Figure 1 shows that 59 (38.3%) of the respondents identified time spent on SM as a primary factor affecting SQ, 37 (24.0%) identified stress as another factor, 33 (21.3%) identified pain, 19 (12.3%) identified exercise period, and 6 (3.9%) identified diet as a contributing factor. The results indicate that most respondents agreed that time spent on SM is the major factor affecting SQAA at the UI

Research question 2: What are the effects of SMA on SQ among UI athletes?

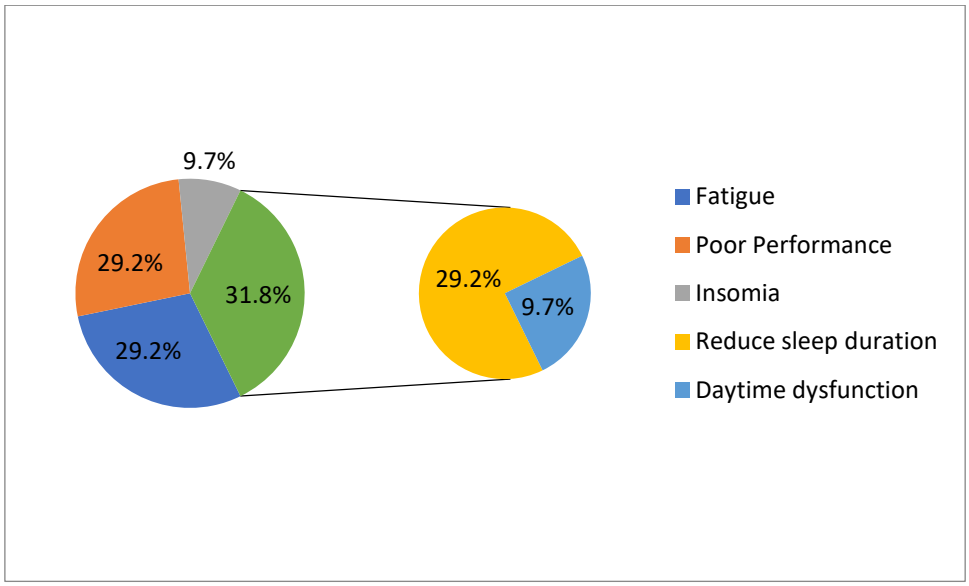

Fig. 2: SMA effect on SQ (*Note: Respondents select multiple responses from the options*) (Researchers, 2025)

Figure 2 reveals that the majority, 49 (31.8%) of the respondents, agreed that fatigue is one of the effects of SMA on SQAA. This was closely followed by 45 (29.2%) of the respondents who agreed that poor performance is an effect of SMA on SQ. Similarly, 45 (29.2%) identified insomnia, and another 45 (29.2%) reported a reduction in SD as an effect of SMA on SQAA. However, only 15 (9.7%) of the respondents agreed that daytime dysfunction is affected by SMA to SQAA.

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Research question 3: Which of the SMP mostly affect SQ among UI athletes?

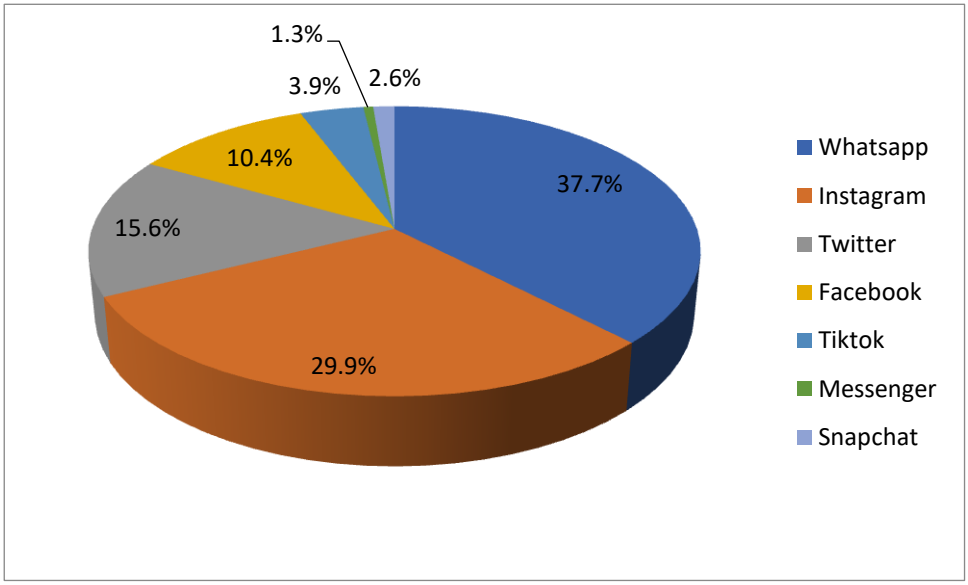

Fig. 3: SMP mostly affects athletes' SQ
(Researchers, 2025)

Figure 3 shows that 58(37.7%) of the respondents agreed that WA is the SMP that mostly affects the SQ, followed by 46(29.9%) of the respondents who agreed that IG is an SMP that affects the SQ. Furthermore, 24(15.6%) affirmed that Twitter (X) is also an SMP that disturbs SQ. Other SMP like FB, TT, messenger was acknowledged by the respondents to affect SQ.

5. Discussion of findings

The results from Research Question 1 indicate that time spent on SM is the primary factor affecting SQAA at the UI, with 59 (38.3%) of the 154 respondents confirming this finding. This is consistent with research by Scott *et al*. (2023), who found that athletes who use SM regularly had worse sleep efficiency, as seen by greater time spent in bed without getting enough sleep. The prominence of time spent on SM as the leading factor suggests that duration of exposure, rather than merely the presence of SMU, plays a critical role in disrupting athletes' sleep patterns.

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Almost half of the respondents (49 or 31.8%) in Research Question 2 identified fatigue as a chief impact of SMA on SQ. This was significantly higher than the other effects, such as poor performance, insomnia, and reduced SD, which were identified by 45 (29.2%) of the respondents each. The results align closely with those of Chen and Liu (2024), who pointed out that fatigue is one of the major damages caused by SMA. In addition, Mesquida *et al*. (2023) and Anderson *et al*. (2022) have also shown that SMA has a detrimental effect on both AP and SQ. The fact that these effects influence each other means that poor SQ through SMA will lead to tiredness and prevent optimal performance.

Results from Research Question 3 indicated that 58 respondents (37.7%) considered WA the primary SMP that influences the athletes' SQ at the UI. This finding is consistent with what Thompson and Martinez (2023) found, as they reported that FB was the biggest SMP that hampers the SQ of collegiate athletes, thus revealing that messaging and social networking platforms have a great influence on the sleep patterns of athletes. WA's presence in the Nigerian context, compared to FB in Western contexts, may indicate different choices of SMPs and also confirm that social networking applications universally impact SQ.

6. Conclusion

This study has concluded that several factors, including time spent on SM, stress, pain, and the amount of exercise, have a significant impact on SQAA among UI students, with SMU being the most influential. Moreover, too much SMU leads to a decline in the SQ of UI athletes, which is evident in symptoms such as fatigue, poor performance, insomnia, and decreased SD. Researchers have identified WA, IG, TT, and X (Twitter) as the primary SMPs contributing to athletes' SQ issues. The results highlight the immediate requirement for programmes focusing on SMU among athletes in universities to save their SQ and thus the AP and overall health of the athletes.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the underlisted recommendations were made.

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1. Athletes at the UI have to significantly decrease the time they spend on SMP, especially during the 90 minutes before going to bed. This "digital curfew" would help to lessen the blue light exposure as well as diminish the brain activity that keeps one from falling asleep. Coaches and team leaders should make athletes aware of the connection between evening SMU and SQ disruption.

2. Athletes need to be equipped with self-regulation skills, which will enable them to control their SMU more efficiently. Among other things, this will entail deciding on a limited amount of time for using SM, making use of apps that help in monitoring and restricting the usage, planning specific periods for looking at SM (making sure that these are not late at night), and changing the habit of scrolling through SM to doing other relaxing activities like reading, meditating, or lightly stretching before going to sleep.

3. Subsequent research should focus on the longitudinal effects of SM reduction interventions on AP, delve into gender differences in SMA patterns among athletes, analyse the relationship between specific features of SMP and sleep disruption, and evaluate the effectiveness of different intervention methods in enhancing both SQ and AP outcomes.

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List of Abbreviations

SQ-Sleep Quality

SQiUA- Sleep Quality in University Athletes

SMA- Social Media Addiction

SMP-Social Media Platform

SM-Social Media

SMU-Social Media Use

AP-Athletes Performance

SQAA-Sleep Quality Addiction among Athletes

UI-University of Ibadan

FOMO- Fear of Missing Out

SD-Sleep Disorder

TAM-Technology Acceptance Model

SRM- Self-Regulation Model