

Relationship quality and sleep

The quality of social relationships and social support appears to be associated with physical health outcomes and sleep quality. Almost all previous research in this area focuses on positive aspects of relationships. In addition to supportive relationships, however, social networks include individuals with whom we have relationships that are aversive (negative), ambivalent (both highly positive and negative) and neutral (indifferent).

This study examined the links between supportive, aversive, ambivalent, and indifferent network ties and sleep quality. 175 middle-aged and older adults reported relationship data, Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)-assessed sleep quality, and depression.

As predicted, supportive ties were positively related to sleep quality, while aversive ties predicted worse sleep quality, associations that were primarily seen for close relationships (for example, spouses). Ambivalent and indifferent ties were not significant predictors of sleep quality. Importantly, depression was found to mediate the link between relationship quality and sleep quality.

These data suggest the more specific types of social relationships that may be linked to poor sleep quality and that depression appears to underlie these associations.

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