



Insomnia in Students and Its Impact on Academic Performance

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Insomnia, characterized by persistent difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep, is increasingly prevalent among students. The disorder has significant consequences on academic performance, as it impairs cognitive functions, memory consolidation, concentration, and emotional regulation. With rising academic stress, digital distractions, and lifestyle irregularities, students are highly vulnerable to sleep disturbances. This article explores the causes of insomnia among students, its impact on academic performance, and possible strategies to mitigate its effects. Addressing insomnia is essential for improving not only students' academic achievements but also their overall mental health and well-being.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Insomnia, Sleep, Students

Introduction

Sleep is a fundamental biological need, essential for optimal physical health, cognitive functioning, and emotional stability. Optimal functioning in these areas will often be impaired in the absence of sufficient sleep. The recommended sleep duration for young adults is between 7 and 9 hours. Among students, however, the prevalence of insomnia has emerged as a growing concern. Insomnia, defined as persistent difficulty in initiating or maintaining sleep, or experiencing non-restorative sleep, is increasingly observed within academic populations due to high levels of stress, irregular schedules, and lifestyle habits. Its consequences extend beyond personal health, significantly influencing academic performance and overall well-being. It is well established that shortened or disturbed sleep quality reduces students' learning capacity and academic performance and interventions that restrict or facilitate students' sleep have been associated with impaired and improved, respectively, neurocognitive functioning and academic performance.

The university serves as a new environment, where students are majorly in their late adolescent years, physically maturing and psychologically unsettled. Late adolescence and emerging adulthood are transitional phases during which university students experience perplexity and indecision. Throughout their academic careers, students face psychosocial pressures, with personal expectations demanding greater emotional and intellectual rigour than previous educational levels. This age bracket experiences a great deal of stress and hardship, which can result in a variety of psychological, social, and physical issues.

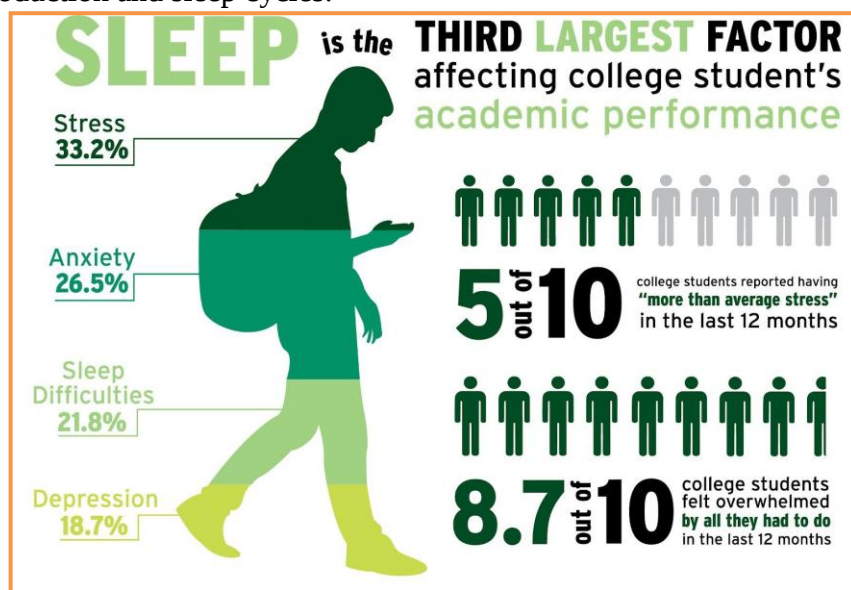
Causes of Insomnia in Students

Student life is marked by demanding schedules, irregular routines, and mounting pressures. Late-night study habits, dependence on caffeinated beverages, excessive use of digital devices, and social obligations often disrupt natural circadian rhythms. Mental health

concerns such as stress, anxiety, and depression further exacerbate the problem, making insomnia both a cause and a consequence of academic strain.

Additionally, heightened anxiety, depression, and social obligations contribute to sleep disturbances. A combination of these factors results in chronic sleep deprivation, which may progress into clinical insomnia if left unaddressed. This condition reduces the restorative benefits of sleep, leaving students mentally fatigued even after spending hours in bed. Several factors contribute to insomnia in students:

- **Academic Stress:** Heavy workload, examinations, and deadlines lead to anxiety and difficulty in sleeping.
- **Technology Use:** Excessive use of smartphones, laptops, and social media at night disrupts melatonin production and sleep cycles.
- **Lifestyle Factors:** Irregular sleep schedules, late-night studying, caffeine consumption, and lack of physical activity negatively affect sleep quality.
- **Psychological Issues:** Stress, depression, and generalized anxiety disorder are strongly associated with chronic insomnia among students.



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Academic Consequences of Sleep Deprivation

Sleep plays a critical role in cognitive functions essential to learning. Scientific evidence shows that adequate rest facilitates memory consolidation, improves attention span, and enhances decision-making. In contrast, students struggling with insomnia often experience:

- Concentration levels decline, making it difficult to absorb and retain lecture material.
- Short- and long-term memory are impaired, directly affecting learning outcomes.
- Cognitive flexibility and problem-solving ability decrease, hampering performance in analytical tasks.
- Overall academic achievement is negatively impacted, with studies showing a strong correlation between poor sleep quality and lower grade point averages (GPA).

In addition to cognitive effects, insomnia often results in reduced motivation, increased absenteeism, and a higher likelihood of academic burnout.

Beyond Academics: Emotional and Physical Costs

The impact of insomnia extends beyond academic performance. Students frequently report heightened irritability, lack of motivation, and symptoms of burnout when experiencing persistent sleep disturbances. Physically, poor sleep weakens the immune system, increases vulnerability to illnesses, and may contribute to long-term health issues such as cardiovascular disease. Psychologically, insomnia often coexists with depression and anxiety, creating a vicious cycle that further diminishes academic productivity.

Strategies for Mitigation

Combating insomnia requires a multi-faceted approach:

- Addressing insomnia requires both institutional and individual interventions.

- **Sleep hygiene education:** Students should be made aware of the importance of maintaining regular sleep schedules, limiting caffeine intake, and reducing late-night screen exposure.
- **Mental health support:** Counselling services and stress-management programs can help students cope with academic and personal pressures.
- **Balanced lifestyle practices:** Incorporating physical activity, mindfulness, and relaxation techniques into daily routines can improve sleep quality.
- **Stress management:** Incorporating mindfulness, yoga, and time-management strategies to reduce anxiety.
- **Institutional support:** Universities can introduce wellness programs, provide counselling services, and adjust workloads or schedules to promote healthier sleep habits.
- **Professional help:** Persistent insomnia may require clinical evaluation and treatment to prevent long-term effects.

10 Tips to Sleep Better



Sleep Schedule

Go to bed and wake up at the **same time** everyday (even on the weekend). **Avoid long naps** during the day.



Avoid Big Meals

Don't eat large/spicy meals **before sleep**. A small snack that contains '**tryptophan**' may help, such as banana, nuts, oats or milk



Turn Devices Off

You don't want any noises distracting you or waking you up. If you use your phone as an alarm, make sure it's in '**do not disturb**' mode.



Relaxing Routine

Exposure to daylight helps reset your '**circadian biological clock**' (sleep-wake cycle). Exercising during the day will promote a **good night's sleep**.



Avoid Caffeine

Avoid consuming caffeine or stimulant food in the evening. This includes soft drinks, tea, energy drinks, coffee, chocolate...



Avoid Screens

The production of '**melatonin**' (the hormone that helps initiate sleep), can be delayed by blue light from electrical gadgets.



Daylight & Exercise

Exposure to daylight helps reset your '**circadian biological clock**' (sleep-wake cycle). Exercising during the day will promote a **good night's sleep**.



Not Feeling Sleepy?

If you are not asleep after half an hour, go to a different room and do something **relaxing** until you feel sleepy.



'Comfy' Bedroom

Make sure your bedroom is **dark, quiet, and cool** and that your mattress and pillow are comfortable enough.



Wellbeing

If sleep issues are **consistent** and have a significant impact on your life, consider seeking support from a **health professional**.

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Conclusion

Insomnia among students is a pressing issue that directly undermines academic performance and long-term health. While the culture of late-night studying and irregular routines is often normalized in academic settings, the evidence is clear that insufficient sleep hinders learning, memory, and overall success. Prioritizing sleep is not a sign of negligence toward studies but an essential element of academic achievement and personal well-being. With rising academic stress and lifestyle changes, it is imperative to address insomnia among students through awareness, preventive measures, and institutional support. By promoting healthy sleep habits and recognizing the importance of rest, students can achieve better academic outcomes and maintain long-term health.

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