Sleep Hygiene and Quality among College Students: A Review of Literature

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College students are at high risk of poor sleep hygiene and impaired sleep quality due to academic, social, and personal demands. Research consistently shows that inadequate sleep hygiene among young adults is associated with physical, cognitive, and mental health problems. As sleep hygiene and quality play a vital role in health and academic success, understanding how these patterns differ between genders can inform targeted interventions. This literature review examines current evidence on sleep hygiene and quality among college students, with a focus on gender differences. It highlights known patterns, contributing factors, and gaps in knowledge that justify further research into gender-related sleep disparities among university students. This review supports the hypothesis that female college students exhibit poorer sleep hygiene and sleep quality than their male counterparts.

Sleep Hygiene and Quality Among College Students.

The transition to college life introduces irregular schedules, late-night studying, social pressures, and stress, all of which can disrupt sleep hygiene. Hershner and Chervin (2014) identified several causes of sleep disturbances among college students, including inconsistent bedtimes, use of

electronic devices late at night, and high caffeine intake. Similarly, Ali, Zolezzi, Awaisu, et al. (2023) reported that nearly 80% of university students in Qatar had poor sleep hygiene behaviors, which significantly correlated with poor sleep quality. Poor sleep hygiene not only reduces sleep duration and quality but also leads to daytime sleepiness, impaired cognitive performance, and increased risk of mental health issues (Peach et al., 2016).

Lund, Reider, Whiting, and Prichard (2010) also documented that over 60% of college students experience poor sleep quality, with predictors including stress, alcohol use, and irregular sleep-wake patterns. Bouloukaki, Tsiligianni, et al. (2023) further observed that sleep quality and fatigue worsen during exam periods, suggesting that stress and academic workload exacerbate already poor sleep habits. Okano et al. (2019) demonstrated that consistent, high-quality sleep was strongly associated with better academic performance in a sample of U.S. college students. Taken together, these findings underscore the widespread prevalence of poor sleep hygiene and its consequences on both mental and academic outcomes among young adults in higher education.

Gender Differences in Sleep Hygiene and Quality

Research shows notable gender differences in sleep patterns and quality among college students, though findings are mixed. Ali et al. (2023) found that female students reported worse sleep hygiene behaviors and poorer subjective sleep quality than males. This was attributed to higher stress levels, hormonal fluctuations, and a greater tendency to engage in late-night study and social activities. Similarly, Bouloukaki et al. (2023) observed that female students reported

significantly greater fatigue and poorer sleep quality during exam periods compared to their male counterparts.

Conversely, Hershner and Chervin (2014) noted that while females generally reported poorer subjective sleep quality, males were more likely to have shorter sleep durations and higher rates of sleep deprivation. Tsai and Li (2004) also observed that females had greater difficulty initiating and maintaining sleep compared to males, though males reported more irregular sleep schedules. These mixed findings highlight the complexity of gender-related sleep behaviors and suggest that biological, psychological, and social factors interact to influence sleep differently across genders. More research is needed to clarify these patterns and develop gender-sensitive interventions.

Consequences of Poor Sleep Hygiene

The consequences of poor sleep hygiene among college students extend beyond fatigue. Peach et al. (2016) showed that poor sleep hygiene and sleep quality were linked to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and negative affect, while good sleep hygiene predicted better mental health outcomes. Becker, Sidol, Van Dyk, and McGrath (2018) found that poor sleep quality predicted declines in academic functioning, increased stress, and impaired social interactions across a semester. Okano et al. (2019) similarly reported that students with inconsistent sleep schedules not only performed worse academically but also reported more emotional instability.

Saruhanjan et al. (2020) demonstrated in a meta-analysis that psychological interventions such as cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia can effectively improve sleep outcomes among college

students, highlighting the modifiability of sleep behaviors. Hershner and O'Brien (2018) further showed that even brief sleep education programs can improve students' sleep habits and awareness of sleep hygiene practices. These findings suggest that addressing sleep hygiene through education and behavioral interventions can have significant benefits for students' academic and mental well-being. Understanding how these consequences may vary by gender could help tailor such interventions more effectively.

Gap in the Literature

Although much research has documented poor sleep quality among college students and identified factors contributing to it, gaps remain in understanding gender-specific differences in sleep hygiene and outcomes. While some studies have noted differences between males and females, few have examined these differences in the context of specific sleep hygiene behaviors (e.g., bedtime consistency, electronic device use, and nighttime awakenings). Moreover, much of the literature relies on self-reported sleep quality without objective measures, which may limit accuracy. Further research is needed to clarify these differences and inform tailored interventions for male and female students.

Conclusion

College students face unique challenges that compromise sleep hygiene and quality, resulting in significant academic and health consequences. Literature suggests that gender differences exist in sleep behaviors and outcomes, though the patterns are complex and sometimes inconsistent. Female students appear to report poorer subjective sleep quality and greater fatigue, while males may exhibit shorter sleep durations and higher variability. Given the critical role of sleep in

students' success and well-being, further research is needed to clarify gender differences and inform targeted interventions. This review supports the hypothesis that female college students exhibit poorer sleep hygiene and sleep quality than their male counterparts.

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