

Sleep Quality and Psychological Distress Among University Students

Samra Ghaffar¹, Riffat Zahir¹

¹National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between sleep quality and psychological distress is well-documented, with poor sleep quality, characterized by difficulty falling asleep and brief sleep duration, being linked to heightened mood disturbances, anxiety, and daytime fatigue. Previous studies, such as those by Seun-Fadipe and Mosaku (2017) and Jamieson et al. (2020), have highlighted these associations, particularly among adolescents.

Sleep Quality: Sleep is defined as a regular, recurrent, readily reversible state of the organism, and quality is defined as the degree to which something excels or its overall excellence; therefore, sleep quality refers to the degree to which sleep excels (Shin et al., 2006).

Psychological Distress: Psychological distress is a comprehensive term that refers to a variety of unpleasant feelings and emotions experienced by individuals whose coping resources are inadequate in the face of stressors. It can manifest in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, and can have a significant impact on a person's overall health and quality of life (Kessler et al., 2003).

RATIONALE

Sleep deprivation caused by prolonged screen time can lead to psychological distress in young adults (Jamieson et al., 2020). University students have increased their use of smartphones and computer screens, which has significantly affected their sleep quality. In this context, the purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is a connection between sleep quality and the level of psychological distress experienced by university students in Pakistan. While most studies on this topic have been conducted in the United States and Europe, only a few have been carried out in Asia (Gaina et al., 2006; Tsai & Li, 2004; Yang et al., 2003). Therefore, this study aims to explore the association between sleep-related characteristics and sleep quality among Pakistani university students using a descriptive survey method. Although some research has examined the relationship between sleep quality and psychological distress in the general population, such as the study by Qadir et al. (2015), there is limited evidence to support these findings. Furthermore, only a small number of studies have specifically focused on the relationship between sleep quality and psychological distress among Pakistani university students.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives

- To investigate the relationship between sleep quality and psychological distress among university students.
- To compare the study variables along various demographics (gender, age, education, work status, family system, university type, student residence type).

HYPOTHESES

- University students with poorer sleep quality will exhibit significantly higher levels of psychological distress.
- All subscales of poor sleep quality will be positively associated with elevated levels of psychological distress.
- University students from higher family monthly income backgrounds will experience higher levels of psychological distress compared to those from lower family monthly income backgrounds.
- Female university students will experience significantly higher levels of psychological distress compared to male students.
- Hostel students will exhibit higher levels of psychological distress compared to day scholars.
- Poor sleep quality will be significantly more prevalent among hostel students than day scholars.

METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

A quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted at the National Institute of Psychology (NIP), Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

SAMPLE

A convenient sampling technique was used in current study. Sample of study was (N = 300) university students including both men (n = 99) and women (n = 201) of age ranges between 18 to 28 years. The data were taken from different universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

INSTRUMENTS

Scales	No. of items	α	M	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Sleep Quality Scale	28	.90	47.51	15.94	0-84	14.78	-.17
DS	12	.90	22.32	8.70	0-36	1-36	-.29
RS	4	.62	6.24	3.01	0-12	0-12	.05
DPS	4	.63	5.37	2.80	0-12	0-12	.04
DMS	2	.57	3.35	1.80	0-6	0-6	-.29
DW	3	.40	5.23	2.09	0-9	0-9	-.16
SS	3	.70	4.99	2.53	0-9	0-9	-.19
Kessler Psychological Distress Scale	10	.91	34.10	9.45	10-50	12-50	-.20

PROCEDURE

FORMAL LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM THE RESPECTIVE COMMITTEES

BRIEFING SAMPLE ABOUT THE STUDY AND TAKING INFORMED CONSENT

ENSURING ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

RESULTS

TABLE 1

Correlations Matrix of Study Variables with Demographics (N=300)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Sleep Quality	1	-.878**	.686**	.732**	.652**	.550**	.730**	.739**	.296**	.092	-.553**
2 DS		1	.406**	.490**	.428**	.374**	.448**	.608**	.283**	.075	-.442**
3 RS			1	.483**	.369**	.364**	.629**	.581**	.192**	.025	-.394**
4 DFS				1	.634**	.260**	.571**	.510**	.197**	.109	-.412**
5 DMS					1	.341**	.497**	.494**	.225**	.032	-.344**
6 DW						1	.427**	.139*	.084	-.303**	
7 SS							1	.598**	.164**	.077	-.540**
8 Psychological Distress								1	.213**	.123*	-.488**
9 Age									1	.081	-.074
10 FMI										1	-.064
11 SH											1

Note. **p< 0.01; *p<0.05; DS= Daytime Symptoms, RS= Restoration after Sleep, DFS=Difficulty in Falling Sleep, DMS=Difficulty in Maintaining Sleep, DW= Difficulty in Waking, SS=Sleep Satisfaction, MI=Family Monthly Income, SH=Sleep Hours

University students with poorer sleep quality were significantly associated with higher levels of psychological distress. Additionally, all subscales of poor sleep quality were positively associated with elevated levels of psychological distress. University students from higher family monthly income backgrounds were associated with higher levels of psychological distress compared to those from lower family monthly income backgrounds. The study also indicated that the severity of psychological distress was significantly higher in women than in men. Additionally, the results showed that psychological distress was also higher in hostel students compared to day scholars. Similarly, poor sleep quality was significantly more prevalent among hostel students than day scholars.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to explore the relationship between sleep quality and psychological distress among university students. Another purpose of the study was to examine the demographic variables including gender, age along the study variables. The findings of this study emphasize the critical link between sleep quality and psychological distress among university students, highlighting that by enhancing sleep quality, there is potential to mitigate psychological distress, thereby fostering better mental health and academic performance.

IMPLICATIONS

- The present study provided evidence of a well-known phenomenon (i.e., psychological distress, and sleep quality).
- This research has a practical implication in Pakistani culture because there was very little research done on these variables.
- This has also helped in raising awareness about poor sleep quality that may lead to psychological distress.
- The results of this research will contribute to the literature on the relationship between sleep quality and psychological distress.

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