

Cause and Effect: The Impact of Sleep Deprivation on College Success

George-Anne Lerner

Student Number

General Arts and Sciences, Georgian College

Communication Essentials, COMM 1016-44

Amanda Quibell

February 11, 2023

Cause and Effect: The Impact of Sleep Deprivation on College Success

Do you cram for tests and pull “all-nighters” for assignments, hoping to improve your grades? You’re not alone. The majority of college students say that they are sleep deprived, and more than 70% of them get less than the recommended 8 hours of rest (Hershner & Chervin, 2014). Unfortunately, by staying up late to study, students may be undermining their goals of improving their grades. Getting enough sleep is vital to a college student's success; sleep deprivation creates challenges for a person's physical, mental health, and learning.

Sleep and physical well-being have a close relationship, especially in regards to the immune system. Lack of sleep can lead to increased stress and inflammation, which can weaken the immune system and make a person likely to get sick (Morris, 2022). Additionally, Besedovksy et al. (2012) reports that sleep deprivation can also disrupt hormones that regulate hunger and physical performance, leading to potential weight gain and decreased physical performance. Several studies indicate that “the shorter your sleep, the shorter your life span” (MacDonald, 2022, para.7). To ensure physical well-being, college students should try to get a good night’s sleep consistently.

Just as sleep deprivation undermines the physical body, a lack of sleep can have a major impact on mental health. Research has shown that good sleep quality is linked to lower rates of depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thinking (Morris, 2022). Taylor et al. (2011) note that this is especially true in college students, who are a population that is particularly susceptible to the onset of mental health disorders. Poor sleep can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including decreased energy levels, impaired memory and attention span, and a general feeling of grumpiness (MacDonald, 2022). There is also a complex relationship between sleep, mood

disorders, and suicide, with insomnia and nightmares being potential risk factors for suicidal ideation (Hershner & Chervin, 2014). Additionally, long term difficulty in falling asleep is linked to feelings of loss of pleasure, punishment, and disliking oneself (Hershner & Chervin, 2014). Therefore, it is important to prioritize sleep in order to maintain good mental health.

In addition to supporting mental health, a good night's sleep helps college students succeed academically. A study of college students showed that better sleep quality, quantity, and consistency over the last month was associated with improved grades (Morris, 2022). Studies also reveal that sleep deprivation impairs memory, attention and executive functioning, which are critical skills required for academic success (Okano et al., 2019). Consistent sleep patterns are shown to directly lead to higher test scores (Ho et al., 2022). Many studies highlight the impact that nighttime sleep habits have in predicting future academic performance. Better quality, longer duration, and greater consistency of sleep are strongly associated with success in college.

In conclusion, sleep is a vital aspect of a college student's life that should not be overlooked. The benefits of a good night's sleep extend far beyond just physical and mental health; it also has a positive impact on academic success. Lack of sleep can lead to many problems that diminish the quality and enjoyment of the overall college experience; in contrast, a healthy sleep routine will lead to better grades, improved memory and attention, and better academic performance. In order to achieve success in college and beyond, it is crucial for students to prioritize a good night's sleep.

References

- Besedovsky, L., Lange, T., & Born, J. (2012). Sleep and immune function. *Pflügers Archiv: European Journal of Physiology*, *463*(1), 121–137. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00424-011-1044-0>
- Hershner, S. D., & Chervin, R. D. (2014). Causes and consequences of sleepiness among college students. *Nature and Science of Sleep*, *6*, 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.2147/NSS.S62907>
- Ho, G.W., Yang, Z., Xing, L., Tsang, K. K.-T., Ruan, H. D., & Li, Y. (2022). Nighttime sleep awakening frequency and its consistency predict future academic performance in college students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(5), 2933. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19052933>
- MacDonald, G. (2022, November 7). Canadians are not getting enough sleep – and that’s a big problem. *The Globe and Mail*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/style/article-sleep-crisis-canada/>
- Morris, M. (2022, August 28). Why college students should feast on sleep. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/college-wellness/202208/why-college-students-should-feast-sleep>
- Okano, K., Kaczmarzyk, J. R., Dave, N., Gabrieli, J. D. E., & Grossman, J. C. (2019). Sleep quality, duration, and consistency are associated with better academic performance in college students. *NPJ Science of Learning*, *4*(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-019-0055-z>

Taylor, D. J., Gardner, C. E., Bramoweth, A. D., Williams, J. M., Roane, B. M., Grieser, E. A., & Tatum, J. I. (2011). Insomnia and mental health in college students. *Behavioral Sleep Medicine*, 9(2), 107–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15402002.2011.557992>

Attribution & Licensing:

"[Cause & Effect: The Impact of Sleep Deprivation on College Success](#)" by Amanda Quibell is licensed under [CC-BY-NC 4.0](#) and provided as an example for students in the OER textbook [Communication Essentials for College](#)

Students: do not include this statement in your paper. This attribution relates to this specific essay example as it appears in the textbook.