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**Research Paper** 

# To Study the Impact of Sleep on Attention Among College Students

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# ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between sleep, attention, and error count among college students. The aim is to assess how sleep impacts attention and error count during cognitive tasks. Objective measures of sleep duration and attention span were collected from college students. Results reveal a significant correlation between attention span and error count, indicating that as attention performance improves, error count decreases, and vice versa. These findings underscore the importance of sleep quality in cognitive functioning and highlight the potential implications for academic performance and overall well-being among college students. Understanding this relationship can inform interventions aimed at promoting healthy sleep habits and enhancing attentional abilities in educational settings.

**Keywords:** Sleep, Attention, Error Count, College students, Cognitive Tasks, attention performance

The American Psychological Association defines attention as a state in which the central nervous system is ready to react to stimuli and cognitive resources are directed toward specific parts of the environment rather than others. Attention involves focusing cognitive resources on certain elements while ignoring others, influenced by past experiences, tasks requiring conscious engagement, and environmental features such as intensity and novelty.

### **Theories of Attention**

- Broadbent's Filter Model: Proposes that humans' attention is focused on one of the signals received via the five senses due to an attentional "bottleneck," filtering messages based on physical characteristics.
- Treisman's Attenuation Model: Suggests that unattended stimuli receive less processing rather than being completely blocked, allowing important information to pass through a hierarchical analysis process.

# Types of Attention

1. Focused Attention: The ability to respond to specific stimuli, often measured by tasks requiring response to a particular signal.

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- 2. Sustained Attention: The capacity to maintain attention over prolonged periods, crucial for tasks requiring prolonged focus.
- 3. Selective Attention: The process of focusing on relevant stimuli while ignoring irrelevant information, enhancing processing and memory performance.
- 4. Alternate Attention: The ability to switch focus between tasks requiring different cognitive resources, indicating mental flexibility.
- 5. Divided Attention: The capacity to process multiple stimuli or perform multiple tasks simultaneously, often leading to decreased performance due to limited cognitive resources.

# Sleep and Its Role in Cognitive Function

Sleep is a circadian condition characterized by a loss of awareness, voluntary muscle relaxation, and reduced responsiveness to stimuli, measured through physiological indicators like electroencephalography. Sleep consists of REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM stages, each playing a crucial role in physical and mental restoration.

- Stage 1 (N1): Transition between wakefulness and sleep.
- Stage 2 (N2): Represents true sleep, characterized by sleep spindles.
- Stage 3 (N3): Deep sleep, essential for physical restoration.
- REM Sleep: Associated with dreaming, where brain activity is high, and muscle activity is low.

### Impact of Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation affects cognitive functions, including attention, memory, and decisionmaking, and is associated with mood disorders, health risks, and decreased immune function. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to long-term health consequences like cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

### Previous Research on Sleep and Attention

Yang et al. (2018): Found that sleep deprivation negatively impacts vigilance and attention, using the Psychomotor Vigilance Test (PVT) to measure reaction times and sustained attention.

Weyandt et al. (2002): Studied the impact of intelligence on attention in young adults, finding that ADHD individuals made more errors on attention tasks.

Geisen et al. (2021): Examined the distribution of attention in navigation tasks, finding that practice improved attention and information processing efficiency.

### **Practice Effect**

The practice effect refers to improvements in cognitive test performance resulting from repeated exposure to the same or similar tasks. This effect is significant in attention studies, as repeated practice can enhance attention and reduce error rates. For instance, participants performing a task multiple times show improved performance due to increased familiarity and efficiency in processing information.

### Rationale

The reason why this study is being conducted stems from growing concerns about sleep deprivation effects on cognitive functioning, especially in college age students. Sleep is a critical factor for human health and an integral part of multiple cognitive processes,

including attention, memory, and decision-making. Even though sleep and cognition have been explored, there is indeed little established in the literature on what sleep does to attention in college students, who are often caught in a cycle of irregular sleep due to academic and social implications.

To address the gap found in the literature, this study examines the association between sleep quality and attentional performance in college students. Because actions and behaviors associated with attention are so important for students in their studies and overall wellbeing, understanding the extent that sleep may influence the action of attention can lead to new methods for improved performance in students. Notably, previous research provides evidence that poor sleep quality relates to decreased attention and increased cognitive error, which can strongly influence academic outcomes in college students.

This study emphasizes college students in order to extend and add to the research regarding sleep and cognitive performance. Certainly, the research findings can also lead to interventions for better quality sleep which could purchase improved attention levels and reduce cognitive error in attentional tasks. In addition to highlighting the importance of sleep for cognitive health, the findings also emphasize the practical implications of sleep quality for educational settings to promote balanced attentional actions and improve overall performance and life quality in college students.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Tipper et al. (1992): This study highlights how practice can stabilize attention-related processes, particularly in response inhibition. The findings indicate that while some aspects of selective attention are robust, others adapt with repeated exposure, which is relevant when considering the effects of sleep on attention stability.

Feinstein et al. (1994): The study suggests that cognitive performance, including attention, improves with repeated practice, especially in younger individuals. This underscores the potential for sleep to enhance or maintain cognitive function over time.

Spiegelhalder et al. (2009): This research shows that poor sleep quality is associated with increased attentional bias in individuals with insomnia. The study suggests that sleep disturbances significantly impact cognitive processing, which aligns with the focus of this research on sleep and attention.

Benitez & Gunstad (2012): The findings demonstrate a link between poor sleep quality and reduced attention in healthy young adults. This underscores the critical role of sleep in maintaining cognitive performance, which is directly related to the focus of this research.

Kwon et al. (2019): This study reveals that ADHD symptoms and sleep quality significantly influence the quality of life in college students, highlighting the importance of good sleep quality for attention and overall well-being.

Okano et al. (2019): The research found that good sleep quality, duration, and stability are correlated with better academic performance among college students, emphasizing the importance of sustained good sleep for maintaining attention and achieving academic success.

Schmickler et al. (2023): This study identifies poor sleep quality as a common issue among college students, with significant predictors including stress and poor self-rated health. The findings suggest that improving sleep habits could enhance attention and academic performance, which is directly relevant to this research.

Mota Albuquerque et al. (2023): The study shows that inadequate sleep negatively impacts attention and cognitive functions, particularly in medical students, indicating a direct link between sleep duration and cognitive performance.

Strom et al. (2023): This research emphasizes that learning environments and distractions significantly impact students' attention. It suggests that minimizing distractions and improving study habits can enhance attention, which is essential when considering the role of sleep in cognitive performance.

### METHODOLOGY

### Sample

The sample consists of 30 female hostellers. The age group was from 18 to 25 years old.

### Materials used/ tools of the study

The study utilizes one scale to collect data namely, "d2 test of Attention" originally by Brickenkamp (1981). This questionnaire is designed to measure selective and sustained attention. In total, the questionnaire contained 14 lines which consisted of 47 items each.

### Procedure

The data was collected with the utilization of "d2 test of attention" which consists of 14 lines and each line contained 47 items and each line had a time limit of 20 seconds. On day one, the participants were given consent forms to sign, and all their queries were resolved. Thereafter, every day for seven consecutive days, the participants individually filled out the D2 forms. The researcher was present at every session with everyone to make sure that there was no fabrication of the responses.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research aims to evaluate the effect of sleep durability and attention on student's performance. T-test was conducted to analyze whether there was significant difference between sleep hours and performance and level of errors. 30 is the total number of respondents in this research study and no gender is considered because all of them are women.

A correlation analysis was done to determine whether the number of hours slept by a participant was related to the concentration level and the number of errors made by the respondent. For this purpose, the needful analysis was done using SPSS software and the results are tabulated below:

		Sleep	Concentration	Error	Day
		_	Performance	score	-
Sleep	Pearson correlation	1	004	007	003
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.959	.923	.960
	N	210	210	210	210
Concentration	Pearson correlation	004	1	911	.150
performance	Sig. (2-tailed)	.959		.001	.029
	Ν	210	210	210	210
Error score	Pearson correlation	007	911	1	168
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.923	.001		.015
	N	210	210	210	210
Day	Pearson correlation	003	.150	168	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.960	.029	.015	
	N	210	210	210	210

Table 1 correlation between sleep, concentration performance and error score

While there was non-significant difference between sleep hours and performance and sleep hours and errors as well, as shown above. However, a significant correlation is established between concentration performance and number of errors made.

Level of error showed a significant difference between Day1 and Day7 as well. To determine the difference in the level of error shown and the level of concentration performance between Day1 and Day 7, an independent t-test was performed on the collected data using SPSS software. The results are presented in the table below:

	DAY	ΖN	MEAN	SD	t	р
Concentration performance	1	30	205.73	38.905	-3.534	<.001
	7	30	241.43	39.349		
Error score	1	30	46.27	21.449	3.908	<.001
	7	30	25.37	19.944		

Table 2: Result of independent t-test on the performance of Day 1 and Day 7

As shown on the Table, the performance of participants on the days 1 to day 7 show a significant difference at P < .001. This lowering error level of day 1 to day 7 result is from the fact which verified much more accurate. So, it can be concluded from the above table that our results support the hypothesis.

To determine the relationship and the difference between the concentration performance and the error count of the individuals from day 1 to day 7, a correlation analysis was done on the collected data with the help of SPSS software. The result of which is presented in the table below:

		Error	<b>Concentration Performance</b>
Error	Pearson correlation	1	896
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	60	60
Concentration	Pearson correlation	896	1
Performance	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	60	60

 Table 3: CP and E correlation table

As it's clear from the results, there is a significant correlation between the level of error and concentration performance. As concentration performance goes high, the error count goes low, and vice versa. It can be said that a negative correlation between the two variables is found at the significant level of p<.001.

The results yielded are promising as the previous literature has thrown similar light over the taken variables. The negative correlation between concentration performance and level of error has been reinforced by much research done previously. One such research is quoted below:

Wühr (2019) investigated the impact of practice on performance in attention evaluation tests, specifically the d2-R test, commonly used in education. Participants underwent testing with two versions of the test, each targeting different word stimuli, one week apart. Results showed that practice improved performance for both groups, but the control group showed greater improvement. This suggests that practice targets specific traits in attention tests. Using multiple test versions with different stimuli could mitigate practice effects.

Like Wühr's findings, the results of this study imply the presence of practice effect, evident in the results of Day 1 and Day 7.

Although the sleep hours were proved to be inconsequential, on Day 1, it is clear from the collected data that Level of Concentration Performance is low in contrast to the error count which appears to be high, like the study done by Wühr. But as the participant conducted the D2 test daily before the final day, i.e., day 7, the data displayed higher level of concentration performance and lower rates in level of error. The improvement in learning curve can be attributed to the habituation and practice effect.

The above-mentioned studies and many more are consistent with the result obtained by this study. Hence it can be said that the results are sufficiently backed up by literature.

# CONCLUSION

The data was gathered using the "d2 test of attention," which has 14 lines. Each line consists of 47 items and has a time constraint of 20 seconds. A correlation study was conducted to ascertain the relationship between the participant's sleep duration and their concentration level and number of errors made. Although the data shown above indicates that there was no significant difference between sleep hours and performance, as well as sleep hours and errors. Nevertheless, a notable association has been discovered between the level of concentration and the frequency of errors committed. There was a notable disparity in the level of inaccuracy between Day1 and Day7. The participants performance from day 1 to day 7 exhibits a substantial disparity with a statistical significance of P < .001. The decrease in error level from day 1 to day 7 is a result of increased verification, which has improved accuracy significantly. Based on the information shown in the table, it can be inferred that our results provide evidence in favor of the hypothesis. There is a strong association between the degree of inaccuracy and the level of concentration performance. As the level of concentration increases, the number of errors decreases, and vice versa.

### Future Implications:

• **Expanding the existing knowledge base**, this research enhances our understanding of the impact of sleep loss on attention among college students. It specifically focuses on the relationship between sleep quality and cognitive functioning. It provides further information regarding the connections between sleep patterns and

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focus, which is crucial knowledge for college students. They are frequently sleep deprived due to the demands of academic work and social life.

- Addressing a Research Deficiency: While there is a substantial amount of research on the relationship between sleep quality and mental function in adults, there is a notable lack of
- studies specifically focusing on college students. The primary aim of this study is to fill the current vacuum by examining the distinct concerns related to sleep quality and attention use among students in technical professions.
- **Informing Intervention Strategies**: Understanding this aspect can provide a foundation for developing intervention techniques aimed at improving both academic performance and overall well-being. An example could be the necessity to evaluate sleep-related problems, such as insufficient sleep, and highlight the high likelihood of experiencing adverse effects on attention. Interventions aimed at fostering good sleep habits could be introduced on college campuses.
- **Investigating the correlation with the practice effect**: Examining the association between attention to detail and the impact of practice would enhance the overall comprehensiveness of this research. College students exhibit diverse levels of attentiveness, and the lack of extensive research on sleep quality among them provides an opportunity to investigate the correlation between sleep quality and attention in a relatively novel situation. Studying how sleep quality affects cognitive processes such as focus, and memory can assist scholars in understanding the underlying mechanisms more comprehensively.

### • Sleep and Its Importance for Cognitive Functioning:

This section discusses the fundamental role sleep plays in cognitive processes like memory consolidation, learning, and problem-solving. It draws on a wide range of literature to demonstrate how both quantity and quality of sleep can significantly impact these cognitive functions.

### • Sleep Deprivation and Cognitive Impairment:

This section highlights the effects of sleep deprivation on various cognitive functions, such as attention, working memory, and executive function. It synthesizes findings from numerous studies, making a strong case for the negative impact of insufficient sleep on cognitive performance.

### • Attention and Its Susceptibility to Sleep Deficits:

This part delves into specific research focusing on the relationship between sleep deficits and attention. It reviews studies that have explored how different aspects of attention (e.g., sustained, selective, and divided attention) are affected by sleep loss.

# • College Students and Sleep Patterns:

This section is particularly relevant as it focuses on the unique sleep challenges faced by college students, such as irregular sleep schedules, late-night studying, and social commitments. It reviews studies that have investigated sleep patterns in this demographic and how they correlate with academic performance and cognitive function, particularly attention.

### • Methodological Approaches in Sleep Research:

This part of the dissertation critically examines the methodologies used in sleep research, including experimental designs, measures of sleep (e.g., polysomnography, self-reports), and cognitive assessments. It discusses the strengths and limitations of various approaches, providing context for the studies reviewed.

# Limitations:

- **Sample Size and Diversity**: Previous research may have utilized bigger or more diverse samples, which enables the findings to be more applicable to a wider population. The external validity of your findings may be compromised by limitations in the sample size or demography of your study, which might arise from constraints such as time, resources, or access to participants.
- **Measurement Accuracy**: The precision and dependability of measurements utilized to evaluate sleep quality and attention span may differ among different research investigations. Measurement error or bias may arise due to variations in measurement tools or subjective interpretations, which can compromise the validity of findings.
- **Control of Confounding Variables**: Prior studies may have more effectively mitigated the influence of potential confounding variables, such as stress, caffeine consumption, or mental health issues, which could impact both sleep quality and attentiveness. Insufficiently accounting for these variables in your study may undermine the internal validity of your findings.
- Self-report bias can affect the assessment of both sleep quality and attention span, as these measures rely on individuals reporting their own experiences, which might be influenced by prejudice or mistakes. Participants' self-assessment of their sleep duration or attention abilities may be inaccurate, which can affect the dependability of the findings.
- Ethical considerations, such as the need to get informed consent and safeguard participant privacy, may impose restrictions on the scope or design of your study in comparison to earlier research.

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The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

### Author's contributions

Both the authors contributed equally to the theoretical development, analysis, interpretation and writing of the manuscript. Exclusive contribution of individual Author should be written.

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