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**Relationship between Sleep Quality and Cognitive
Performance in Adults in Morocco**

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the relationship between sleep quality and cognitive performance in adults in Morocco.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study indicated that poor sleep quality, characterized by shorter duration, fragmented sleep patterns, and sleep disorders like insomnia, adversely affects various cognitive functions. These include attention, memory consolidation, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. Adults experiencing sleep disturbances often exhibit reduced cognitive flexibility and slower reaction times, impairing their overall productivity and performance in daily tasks. Conversely, good sleep quality, defined by sufficient duration, uninterrupted sleep cycles, and adherence to regular sleep schedules, correlates positively with cognitive performance. Adults who consistently achieve high-quality sleep tend

to demonstrate enhanced cognitive abilities, such as improved memory retention, faster information processing, and better executive functioning. These findings underscore the critical role of sleep in maintaining optimal cognitive health throughout adulthood. Effective strategies to promote better sleep hygiene, such as establishing a relaxing bedtime routine and creating a conducive sleep environment, are increasingly recognized as integral to supporting cognitive function and overall well-being in adults.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: The two-process model of sleep regulation, the synaptic homeostasis hypothesis and the network physiology theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the relationship between sleep quality and cognitive performance in adults in Morocco. In practical terms, there is a need to develop and implement educational programs that raise awareness about the crucial link between sleep quality and cognitive health among adults. At the policy level, advocating for healthcare guidelines that prioritize sleep assessment and management is paramount.

Keywords: *Sleep Quality, Cognitive Performance, Adults*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between sleep quality and cognitive performance in adults is a critical area of study that underscores the profound impact of sleep on mental function. In developed economies like the USA, cognitive performance has been extensively studied, with memory and attention tests serving as key metrics. A study by Smith (2018) indicates a gradual decline in cognitive performance among older adults in the USA, with memory and attention scores decreasing by approximately 1-2% annually over the past decade. For example, in a longitudinal study conducted over five years with a sample size of 1000 participants aged 65 and above, researchers found a significant decrease in memory recall and sustained attention tasks among this demographic. These findings suggest a concerning trend in cognitive health among the elderly population in developed economies like the USA.

Similarly, in Japan, another developed economy, cognitive performance trends have been observed. According to a study by Tanaka and Inui (2020), cognitive decline rates in Japan have been relatively stable over the past decade, with memory and attention scores showing a slight improvement among older adults. For instance, in a cross-sectional analysis of 500 participants aged 60 and above, researchers noted a 0.5% increase in memory recall and attention span compared to data from five years prior. These findings highlight potential differences in cognitive aging trajectories between developed economies, with Japan exhibiting a more stable or slightly improving trend in cognitive performance among older adults.

Transitioning to developing economies such as India, cognitive performance trends present unique challenges and opportunities. A study by Gupta and Singhal (2019) focused on cognitive abilities among middle-aged adults in urban India, revealing a significant variability in memory and attention scores across different socioeconomic strata. The research highlighted that individuals with higher education and socioeconomic status tended to perform better on cognitive tests, indicating a link between education, socioeconomic factors, and cognitive functioning. For instance, in a sample of 500 participants aged 40-60, those with tertiary education demonstrated a 15% higher performance in memory and attention tasks compared to those with primary education only.

In Brazil, another developing economy, cognitive performance trends reflect similar disparities and influences. Research by Oliveira (2022) investigated cognitive decline patterns among older adults in rural areas of Brazil, emphasizing the impact of lifestyle factors such as physical activity and social engagement on cognitive health. The study, conducted over a three-year period with 300 participants aged 65 and above, revealed that individuals who engaged in regular physical exercise and social interactions exhibited slower rates of cognitive decline, particularly in tasks related to attention and processing speed. These findings underscore the importance of lifestyle interventions in mitigating cognitive decline in developing economies like Brazil.

In China, cognitive performance has been a subject of interest, especially regarding the impact of urbanization and lifestyle changes. Research by Li, Zhang, Wang, and Chen (2020) explored cognitive function among middle-aged adults in rapidly urbanizing regions of China. The study, involving 600 participants aged 45-65, revealed a significant correlation between environmental factors such as air quality and cognitive performance, particularly in memory and executive function tasks. The findings suggest that rapid urbanization and environmental quality may influence cognitive health in developing economies like China.

Cognitive performance trends in Mexico highlight the importance of cultural and educational factors. A study by García-Ramos, López, Hernández, and Torres (2018) focused on cognitive aging among older adults in Mexico City, emphasizing the role of bilingualism and educational attainment in preserving cognitive function. The research, conducted with 300 participants aged 60 and above, noted that bilingual individuals and those with higher levels of education exhibited better cognitive outcomes, including memory and attention scores. These findings underscore the complex interplay between language, education, and cognitive abilities in diverse cultural settings.

Cognitive performance research in South Korea has focused on the impact of aging demographics and societal factors. A study by Park and Kim (2019) investigated cognitive decline among older adults in urban and rural areas of South Korea. The research, involving 400 participants aged 65 and above, found that individuals in rural settings exhibited slower rates of cognitive decline compared to their urban counterparts. Factors such as community engagement and social support were identified as potential contributors to these differences in cognitive aging trajectories.

In Turkey, cognitive performance trends have been studied in relation to socioeconomic disparities and access to healthcare. A study by Yılmaz, Akgün and Yalçın (2021) examined cognitive function among middle-aged adults from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The research, conducted with 500 participants aged 40-60, revealed that individuals with lower socioeconomic status and limited access to healthcare services demonstrated poorer cognitive outcomes, particularly in memory and attention tasks. These findings underscore the importance of addressing socioeconomic inequalities to promote cognitive health in developing economies like Turkey.

In Russia, cognitive performance research has focused on the impact of lifestyle factors and mental health on cognitive abilities. A study by Ivanov, Petrov and Sokolov (2019) examined cognitive function among adults aged 40-60 in urban and rural regions of Russia. The research highlighted that individuals with higher levels of physical activity and better mental health status demonstrated superior cognitive performance, particularly in tasks related to attention and working memory. These findings underscore the importance of holistic approaches to promote cognitive health in diverse Russian populations.

Cognitive performance trends in South Africa have been studied in the context of socioeconomic inequalities and access to healthcare. A study by Dlamini, Mthembu and Ntombela (2020) investigated cognitive function among older adults from different income groups. The research, involving 500 participants aged 65 and above, found that individuals with lower income levels and limited access to healthcare services exhibited higher rates of cognitive decline over a five-year period. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and policy measures to address cognitive health disparities in South Africa and similar economies.

In Sub-Saharan economies like Nigeria, cognitive performance studies are emerging but face challenges due to limited resources and infrastructure. A study by Adeyemi and Ogunmokun (2021) explored cognitive function among young adults in Nigeria, highlighting the impact of nutritional status and environmental factors on cognitive abilities. The research, involving 200 participants aged 18-30, noted that individuals with adequate nutrition and access to educational resources demonstrated higher scores in memory and attention tasks compared to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. These findings underscore the complex interplay of socioeconomic factors in shaping cognitive outcomes in Sub-Saharan African contexts.

Similarly, in South Africa, cognitive performance trends reflect multifaceted influences. Research by Van der Merwe and Pillay (2023) examined cognitive aging patterns among a diverse sample of older adults in urban and rural South Africa, revealing disparities in access to healthcare and cognitive support services. The study, which included 400 participants aged 60 and above, highlighted that individuals in urban areas with better access to healthcare facilities exhibited higher cognitive functioning, particularly in tasks related to executive function and attention span. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and healthcare policies to address cognitive health disparities in Sub-Saharan economies like South Africa.

Quality of sleep, gauged by factors such as duration and sleep disturbances, is intricately linked to cognitive performance. Adequate sleep duration, typically defined as 7-9 hours for adults, is associated with improved cognitive function, including enhanced memory consolidation and sustained attention (Walker, 2017). Conversely, insufficient sleep duration, characterized by chronic sleep deprivation, can lead to cognitive deficits, impacting attentional processes, decision-making abilities, and problem-solving skills (Lo, Chou & Yang, 2020). Furthermore, sleep disturbances like insomnia, sleep apnea, or restless leg syndrome can disrupt sleep quality and architecture, contributing to cognitive impairments such as reduced memory recall and compromised attentional focus (Yaffe, Falvey & Hoang, 2018). These findings underscore the critical role of sleep duration and disturbances in shaping cognitive performance, emphasizing the significance of fostering healthy sleep habits for optimal cognitive functioning.

Additionally, variations in sleep quality, encompassing metrics like sleep efficiency and fragmentation, significantly influence cognitive performance. High sleep efficiency, reflecting the percentage of time spent asleep while in bed, is associated with better cognitive outcomes, including improved memory consolidation and enhanced attentional control (Shekleton, Flynn-Evans, Miller & Rajaratnam, 2018). Conversely, increased sleep fragmentation, characterized by frequent awakenings or disrupted sleep cycles, is linked to poorer cognitive performance, particularly affecting tasks that demand sustained attention and efficient information processing (Winer, Mander & Walker, 2021). Recognizing these nuances in sleep quality and their impact on cognitive function is crucial for implementing targeted interventions and promoting cognitive health across diverse populations.

Problem Statement

The relationship between sleep quality and cognitive performance in adults is a crucial area of investigation, particularly given the growing body of research highlighting the impact of sleep on various cognitive functions. Studies by Kurdi and Bellesi (2021) and Cellini and Mednick (2020) have emphasized the intricate interplay between sleep physiology and cognitive processes, underscoring the importance of understanding how sleep quality, including factors such as duration and disturbances, influences cognitive performance. However, despite these advancements, there remains a need for further research to elucidate the specific mechanisms through which sleep quality affects cognitive functions such as memory and attention in adults, as highlighted by Shekleton and Bartlett (2018). Additionally, exploring the potential moderating or mediating factors that may influence this relationship, such as age, gender, and comorbidities, is essential for developing targeted interventions to improve both sleep quality and cognitive outcomes in adult populations.

Theoretical Framework

The Two-Process Model of Sleep Regulation

Originated by Alexander Borbély, this model proposes two interconnected processes that regulate sleep: the circadian process (Process C) and the homeostatic process (Process S). Process C involves the body's internal clock, regulating the timing of sleep-wake cycles based on light-dark cues. Process S, on the other hand, represents the homeostatic drive for sleep, increasing as wakefulness continues and dissipating during sleep. This theory is relevant to the topic as it helps explain how sleep quality, influenced by both circadian rhythms and homeostatic factors, impacts cognitive performance in adults (Borbély, 2018).

The Synaptic Homeostasis Hypothesis (SHY)

Proposed by Giulio Tononi and Chiara Cirelli, SHY posits that sleep serves to downscale synaptic strength, clearing out unnecessary connections formed during wakefulness and promoting synaptic plasticity essential for learning and memory. This hypothesis suggests that sleep quality, including both duration and continuity, directly influences synaptic homeostasis and, consequently, cognitive performance in adults. Understanding SHY is crucial for exploring the neurobiological mechanisms underlying the relationship between sleep and cognition (Tononi & Cirelli, 2018).

The Network Physiology Theory

This theory, developed by Plamen Ch. Ivanov and colleagues, focuses on the dynamic interactions and coordination among physiological systems during sleep. It emphasizes the integration of sleep stages and physiological processes across different organ systems, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to studying sleep quality and its impact on cognitive functions. By considering sleep as a complex network of physiological interactions, this theory offers insights into how disturbances in sleep architecture can affect cognitive performance in adults (Ivanov, Bartsch & Hausdorff, 2019).

Empirical Review

Smith and Johnson (2019) conducted a longitudinal study spanning five years and involving 500 adults aged 30-50 to delve into the impact of sleep duration and sleep disturbances on cognitive function. The study meticulously tracked participants' sleep patterns and cognitive performance through standardized tests at regular intervals, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of sleep quality and cognitive abilities over time. By employing objective measures such as actigraphy and polysomnography alongside validated cognitive assessments, the study provided robust and objective data on the relationship between sleep quality and cognitive outcomes. The findings unveiled a compelling link between sleep quality and cognitive abilities, with participants who consistently achieved sufficient sleep duration and experienced fewer sleep disturbances showcasing superior cognitive performance across various domains. Specifically, improvements were noted in memory recall, attentional focus, cognitive flexibility, and overall cognitive efficiency among individuals with better sleep quality. These results underscore the significance of prioritizing healthy sleep habits, optimizing sleep duration, and minimizing sleep disruptions for preserving and enhancing cognitive function over time, particularly in middle-aged adults who may be more susceptible to cognitive changes.

Jones (2018) undertook a cross-sectional study comprising 600 participants aged 40-60 to investigate the relationship between sleep efficiency and cognitive abilities. The study implemented rigorous methodologies, including polysomnography to objectively measure sleep efficiency and a battery of standardized cognitive tests to evaluate cognitive performance across multiple domains. Through detailed analyses and statistical adjustments for potential confounding variables, the study provided robust insights into how sleep quality influences cognitive outcomes in middle-aged adults. The results revealed a significant positive correlation, indicating that individuals with higher sleep efficiency demonstrated better cognitive outcomes, including faster processing speed, improved executive function, enhanced cognitive flexibility, and superior overall cognitive performance. This association suggests that optimizing sleep efficiency, characterized by a higher proportion of time spent asleep while in bed, could potentially serve as a protective factor against cognitive decline and impairment in middle-aged adults, highlighting the importance of addressing sleep quality as a modifiable factor for cognitive health.

Brown and Martinez (2021) delved into the impact of sleep fragmentation on cognitive performance in a cohort of 400 adults aged 50-70. Employing a robust methodology, the study utilized sophisticated sleep monitoring techniques, such as actigraphy and sleep diaries, coupled with comprehensive cognitive assessments covering various cognitive domains. By meticulously analyzing sleep continuity and cognitive function metrics, the researchers sought to elucidate how disruptions in sleep continuity affect cognitive abilities in older adults. The findings indicated that individuals experiencing increased sleep fragmentation, characterized by frequent awakenings or disrupted sleep cycles, exhibited poorer cognitive performance compared to those with more consolidated and uninterrupted sleep patterns. Specifically, deficits were observed in tasks requiring sustained attention, working memory, cognitive control, and executive function among individuals with higher sleep fragmentation. These results highlight the detrimental effects of fragmented sleep on cognitive abilities, underscoring the importance of promoting uninterrupted and restorative sleep for optimal cognitive functioning and cognitive health maintenance, especially in older adults who may be more vulnerable to sleep disturbances and cognitive changes associated with aging.

Chang and Lee (2020) embarked on a randomized controlled trial involving 300 older adults aged 65 and above to evaluate the efficacy of sleep quality interventions on cognitive performance. The study implemented a rigorous experimental design, randomizing participants into intervention and control groups, with the intervention group receiving targeted sleep quality improvement interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) or sleep hygiene education. Through meticulous monitoring of sleep parameters, cognitive assessments, and follow-up evaluations, the researchers assessed the impact of sleep quality interventions on cognitive function over time. The findings revealed significant improvements in cognitive function among participants who underwent sleep quality interventions compared to those in the control group, indicating the potential efficacy of interventions aimed at improving sleep quality in enhancing cognitive health in older adults. Specifically, improvements were noted in memory recall, attentional focus, cognitive flexibility, and overall cognitive performance metrics among individuals receiving sleep quality interventions. These results highlight the potential of targeted interventions, such as CBT-I, in enhancing cognitive health, mitigating age-related cognitive decline, and promoting optimal cognitive functioning in older adults, underscoring the importance

of addressing sleep quality as a modifiable factor for cognitive health maintenance across the lifespan.

Patel and Gupta (2018) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis comprising 15 studies and involving 2000 adults across diverse age groups to evaluate the overarching impact of sleep quality on cognitive performance. The meta-analysis synthesized data from various studies using rigorous statistical methods, providing a robust overview of the relationship between sleep quality and cognitive outcomes across different populations. By pooling effect sizes and conducting subgroup analyses, the meta-analysis revealed a strong and consistent association between poor sleep quality and cognitive impairments, encompassing deficits in memory, attention, executive function, processing speed, and overall cognitive processing abilities. These findings underscore the critical role of addressing sleep disturbances, optimizing sleep quality, and promoting healthy sleep habits to preserve cognitive function and mitigate cognitive decline across the lifespan. The meta-analysis further highlighted the importance of considering sleep quality as a modifiable risk factor for cognitive impairments and cognitive health maintenance in both clinical and non-clinical settings.

Kim and Park (2019) focused on elucidating the effects of acute sleep deprivation on cognitive function in a cohort of 100 young adults aged 20-30. Employing a controlled experimental design, the study subjected participants to acute sleep deprivation for a specified period, followed by rigorous cognitive assessments using standardized tests to evaluate cognitive performance across various domains. The findings unveiled substantial declines in cognitive function following acute sleep deprivation, encompassing impairments in attentional control, memory consolidation, cognitive flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and overall cognitive performance metrics. These results underscore the immediate and profound impact of inadequate sleep on cognitive abilities, highlighting the necessity of prioritizing sufficient sleep, maintaining healthy sleep habits, and addressing sleep deficits for optimal cognitive functioning, particularly among younger adults who may be more susceptible to the effects of sleep deprivation on cognitive health.

Lee and Wang (2022) conducted a prospective cohort study involving 800 adults aged 30-65 to investigate the long-term impact of sleep duration variability on cognitive function. Using actigraphy data to assess sleep duration variability and standardized cognitive tests to evaluate cognitive performance, the study aimed to elucidate how fluctuations in sleep duration influence cognitive outcomes over time. The findings revealed that individuals with greater sleep duration variability exhibited poorer cognitive performance, including deficits in memory retention, attentional control, and cognitive flexibility. Specifically, inconsistent sleep duration patterns were associated with reduced cognitive resilience and increased susceptibility to cognitive decline. These results underscore the importance of maintaining regular sleep patterns and minimizing sleep duration variability for optimal cognitive functioning and cognitive health maintenance throughout adulthood. The study highlights the significance of stable sleep schedules and consistent sleep durations in promoting cognitive resilience and mitigating cognitive impairments associated with sleep variability, providing valuable insights into the long-term effects of sleep patterns on cognitive outcomes across the lifespan.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into

already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gap: While the studies comprehensively explored the impact of sleep quality on cognitive performance, there is a conceptual gap in understanding the mechanisms underlying this relationship. Specifically, further research is needed to elucidate the neurobiological pathways through which sleep quality influences cognitive functions such as memory recall, attentional focus, and executive function. Investigating neurophysiological markers, such as brain activity patterns during sleep and cognitive tasks, could provide deeper insights into the neural mechanisms mediating the effects of sleep quality on cognitive outcomes (Patel and Gupta, 2018).

Contextual Gap: The study by Lee and Wang (2022) focused on adult populations, particularly middle-aged and older adults, with limited attention given to younger age groups or specific demographic characteristics (e.g., socioeconomic status, cultural factors). A contextual research gap exists in exploring how sleep quality impacts cognitive performance across diverse demographic groups and life stages. Future research could investigate how factors such as socioeconomic disparities, cultural influences on sleep behaviors, and life transitions (e.g., adolescence, parenthood) interact with sleep quality to modulate cognitive abilities.

Geographical Gap: The studies by Brown and Martinez (2021) primarily focused on sleep quality and cognitive performance in developed economies, with limited representation from developing or underrepresented geographical regions. A geographical research gap exists in understanding how sociodemographic, environmental, and cultural factors unique to different regions may influence the relationship between sleep quality and cognitive outcomes. Conducting cross-cultural studies and including diverse geographical samples would enhance the generalizability of findings and provide a more nuanced understanding of the global implications of sleep quality on cognitive health.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The relationship between sleep quality and cognitive performance in adults is a crucial area of study with significant implications for overall well-being and functioning. Through numerous studies, it has become evident that poor sleep quality, including insufficient sleep duration, disrupted sleep patterns, and sleep disorders, can negatively impact cognitive function.

Key findings suggest that adequate and high-quality sleep is essential for optimal cognitive performance across various domains such as attention, memory, problem-solving, and decision-making. Sleep plays a vital role in consolidating memories, processing information, and maintaining cognitive flexibility. Conversely, inadequate or disrupted sleep can lead to cognitive deficits, including decreased attention span, impaired memory recall, reduced executive function, and slower processing speed. These effects can have a profound impact on daily activities, work performance, academic achievements, and overall quality of life.

Therefore, promoting good sleep hygiene and addressing sleep-related issues are essential strategies for enhancing cognitive performance and overall well-being in adults. Effective interventions may include establishing a regular sleep schedule, creating a comfortable sleep

environment, managing stress and anxiety, avoiding stimulants close to bedtime, and seeking professional help for sleep disorders when necessary. In conclusion, prioritizing sleep quality is not only crucial for physical health but also plays a vital role in maintaining optimal cognitive function and performance in adults.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Further research in the field of sleep quality and cognitive performance in adults can greatly benefit from an integrated approach that considers multidimensional factors. This approach would involve exploring the intricate interplay between various elements such as age, gender, lifestyle habits, mental health conditions, and socioeconomic status. By incorporating these diverse factors into theoretical frameworks, researchers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of how sleep quality influences cognitive function across different populations. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies would be highly beneficial to track changes in sleep quality over time and assess their impact on cognitive abilities. Longitudinal research can reveal causal relationships and long-term effects, contributing significantly to the refinement and advancement of theoretical models in this area.

Practice

In practical terms, there is a need to develop and implement educational programs that raise awareness about the crucial link between sleep quality and cognitive health among adults. These programs should provide evidence-based strategies and tools for improving sleep hygiene and addressing common sleep disorders. Moreover, collaborative efforts with organizations are essential to introduce workplace interventions that promote healthy sleep practices. This can include initiatives such as flexible work schedules, designated nap areas, and stress-reduction programs tailored to improve sleep quality and cognitive performance among employees. By integrating such practices into daily routines, individuals can experience tangible improvements in their cognitive abilities and overall well-being.

Policy

At the policy level, advocating for healthcare guidelines that prioritize sleep assessment and management is paramount. Encouraging healthcare providers to routinely screen for sleep disorders and offer evidence-based interventions can significantly improve sleep quality and cognitive outcomes for adults. Furthermore, supporting public health initiatives that highlight the importance of sleep for cognitive health and overall wellness is crucial. This involves community-based programs, media campaigns, and policy recommendations aimed at promoting healthy sleep habits at the population level. By addressing sleep quality within broader public health agendas, policymakers can contribute to creating environments that foster optimal cognitive performance and enhance the quality of life for adults.

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