

## Study on the Use of Sleeping Pills and Its Impact among Students of IMSU

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**Abstract:** The study examined the use of sleeping pills and their impact among students of Imo State University, Owerri, using a descriptive survey design. Four research questions guided the study, with data collected through self-administered, structured questionnaires. Stratified random sampling and Taro Yamane's formula determined the sample size. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies were used for analysis. Results showed that 66.7% of respondents never used sleeping pills, while 40% reported not using them at all. Among users, 41.7% preferred herbal or natural remedies, and 46.7% cited academic stress as the primary reason for their use. Notably, 48.3% of respondents had tried relaxation techniques before resorting to sleeping pills, and 26.7% were neutral about external factors influencing their need for sleep aids. Additionally, 45% were unaware of potential side effects, and 43.3% believed sleeping pill use negatively affected academic performance due to drowsiness or fatigue. The study concludes that sleeping pill use among IMSU students is not prevalent but is primarily driven by academic stress, with a preference for herbal remedies among users.

**Keywords:** Sleeping Pills, Impact, Students, Imsu.

### Research Paper

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## INTRODUCTION

Sleep disturbances are a common problem among college students, with prevalence rates ranging from 30-60%. These disturbances can have a significant impact on academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. In an effort to manage their sleep problems, many students turn to over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription sleeping pills. However, the use of these medications can be problematic, and there is growing concern about their potential for misuse and addiction [1].

The use of sleeping pills is influenced by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors. In some cultures, sleeping pills are viewed as a legitimate and effective treatment for sleep problems, while in other cultures they are seen as a dangerous and addictive substance. Similarly, social norms and expectations can influence whether or not someone uses sleeping pills, and the availability and cost of these medications can also play a role [2].

The use of sleeping pills can have a significant impact on help-seeking behaviors among students. Studies have shown that students who use sleeping pills are less likely to seek help for their sleep problems from a healthcare professional [3]. This is likely due to a number of factors, including the stigma associated with

using sleeping pills, the belief that these medications are not effective, and the fear of becoming addicted [4].

The prevalence of sleeping pill use among college students varies widely depending on the study population and the definition of sleeping pill use. Studies that have used broad definitions of sleeping pill use, including OTC and prescription medications, have found prevalence rates ranging from 20-60%. Studies that have used more narrow definitions of sleeping pill use, including only prescription medications, have found prevalence rates ranging from 5-15% [5]. The use of sleeping pills among college students is often episodic, with students using these medications only when they have difficulty sleeping. However, some students use sleeping pills on a regular basis, and this can lead to problems with tolerance, dependence, and addiction. Studies have shown that students who use sleeping pills on a regular basis are more likely to experience daytime sleepiness, impaired cognitive function, and difficulty concentrating [6]. The use of sleeping pills is influenced by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors. In some cultures, sleeping pills are viewed as a legitimate and effective treatment for sleep problems. In other cultures, these medications are seen as a dangerous and addictive substance. Similarly, social norms and expectations can influence whether or not someone uses sleeping pills, and the availability and cost of these medications can also play a role.

Cultural factors can have a significant impact on the use of sleeping pills. In some cultures, sleeping pills are seen as a normal and acceptable way to treat sleep problems. In other cultures, these medications are viewed as a dangerous and addictive substance. For example, in the United States, sleeping pills are widely used and are often seen as a safe and effective treatment for sleep problems. In contrast, in some Asian cultures, sleeping pills are viewed with suspicion and are only used as a last resort. The cultural context in which someone lives can also influence their beliefs about the causes of sleep problems. In some cultures, sleep problems are seen as a sign of weakness or laziness. In other cultures, sleep problems are seen as a medical condition that requires treatment. These beliefs can influence whether or not someone seeks help for their sleep problems and whether or not they are willing to use sleeping pills [7].

Social factors can also influence the use of sleeping pills. For example, students who live in dormitories or other communal living situations may be more likely to use sleeping pills than students who live in private apartments or houses. This is likely due to the fact that students who live in communal living situations are more likely to be exposed to noise, light, and other environmental factors that can interfere with sleep. Social norms and expectations can also influence whether or not someone uses sleeping pills. For example, students who have friends or family members who use sleeping pills may be more likely to use these medications themselves. Similarly, students who believe that sleeping pills are a safe and effective way to treat sleep problems may be more likely to use these medications than students who have negative beliefs about sleeping pills. Individual factors can also influence the use of sleeping pills. For example, students who have a history of mental health problems or who are experiencing stress or anxiety are more likely to use sleeping pills than students who do not have these problems. Similarly, students who have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep are more likely to use sleeping pills than students who do not have these problems [9].

The use of sleeping pills can have a significant impact on help-seeking behaviors among students. Studies have shown that students who use sleeping pills are less likely to seek help for their sleep problems from a healthcare professional. This is likely due to a number of factors, including the stigma associated with using sleeping pills, the belief that these medications are not effective, and the fear of becoming addicted. The stigma associated with using sleeping pills can be a major barrier to help-seeking. Many students are reluctant to admit that they are using sleeping pills, and they may be afraid of being judged or labeled as weak or lazy. This stigma can prevent students from seeking help from a healthcare professional, even if they are experiencing significant sleep problems. The belief that sleeping pills

are not effective can also be a barrier to help-seeking. Some students may believe that sleeping pills are not effective, and they may be reluctant to seek help from a healthcare professional if they do not believe that there is anything that can be done to help them. This belief can be reinforced by the fact that sleeping pills can have side effects, and they may not be effective for everyone. The fear of becoming addicted to sleeping pills can also be a barrier to help-seeking. Some students may be afraid of becoming addicted to sleeping pills, and they may be reluctant to seek help from a healthcare professional if they believe that they will be prescribed these medications. This fear can be reinforced by the fact that sleeping pills can be addictive, and they can have serious side effects if they are misused [10].

The use of sleeping pills has become increasingly common among university students. This trend is particularly concerning given the potential risks associated with sleeping pill use, including addiction, overdose, and other health problems. In addition to the physical risks, sleeping pill use can also have a negative impact on mental health. Students who use sleeping pills may experience difficulty concentrating, memory problems, and mood disturbances. They may also be more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as alcohol and drug abuse [11].

Despite the risks, many students continue to use sleeping pills to cope with stress, anxiety, and other sleep problems. This is likely due, in part, to the cultural and social attitudes towards sleeping pills. In many cultures, sleeping pills are seen as a safe and effective way to treat sleep problems. This perception is often reinforced by the media, which frequently portrays sleeping pills as a quick and easy solution to sleep problems [12].

However, the reality is that sleeping pills are not a harmless solution. They can have serious side effects, and they can be addictive. It is important to be aware of the risks associated with sleeping pill use and to seek help from a healthcare professional if you are experiencing sleep problems. Hence the study is aimed to examine the Cultural and Social Attitudes towards the Use of Sleeping Pills and Their Impact on Help-Seeking Behaviors among Students of Imo State University Owerri.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

The research design for this study was a Descriptive survey. It will involve collecting data from undergraduate students in different faculties at IMSU Owerri to assess their cultural and social attitudes.

### Area of the Study

The study will be conducted in IMSU Owerri, which is located in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. This area of study was chosen because it represents a specific

population of undergraduate students with a focus on different faculties.

### Study Population

The study population consisted of 1600 undergraduate students enrolled in different faculties at IMSU Owerri. These students will be selected based on their enrollment in different-related programs and their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The selected students will be selected randomly from final year students of the following faculties: Education, Management Sciences, Law, Agriculture, Health Sciences and Environmental Sciences.

### Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used was a stratified random sampling method. The students will be stratified based on their academic level (e.g., year of study) to ensure representation from different cohorts.

### Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed to assess the study on the use of sleeping pills and its impact among students of Imo state University Owerri. The questionnaire will include both closed-ended questions to gather quantitative data.

### Validity/Reliability of Instrument

The questionnaire underwent a validation process to ensure its content validity by the supervisor. Expert reviewers in the field of student behaviours and survey research assessed the relevance and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire items. The reliability of the instrument will be assessed through a pilot study, where the questionnaire will be administered to a small sample of students to evaluate its internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The relevant reliability estimate was established for the instrument.

The reliability coefficient of the instrument was computed using Cronbach alpha statistics. And reliability coefficient values obtained are .935, .941, .913, .905, and .935 for the cluster a, b, c, d and e respectively. The grand reliability coefficient is .917.

### Method of Data Collection

The data was collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed to the selected undergraduate students. The questionnaires will be distributed during convenient times and locations within the population of study. Participants will be given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and they will have the option to seek clarification if needed.

### Statistical Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, was used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses to the questionnaire items. Inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests or t-tests, may be used to explore relationships between variables and test hypotheses, if applicable.

### Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations was gotten from department of Public Health, Imo State University Owerri.

## RESULTS

### Data analysis and Presentation of Data

This chapter deals with the analysis and presentation of data. Simple tables were used to show the distribution of responses to the various questions. Three hundred questionnaire were distributed to the respondents while all (100.0%) questionnaires were returned.

**Table 4.1: Showing the Age of the Respondents**

Age of the Child	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-21 years	55	18.3
22-25 years	56	18.7
26-29 years	75	25.0
30 years and Above	114	38.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024)

The above table shows that majority 114 (38.0%) of the respondents were between 30 years and Above.

**Table 4.2: Showing the Gender of the respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	160	53.3
Female	140	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024)

The above table shows that majority 160 (53.3%) of the respondents were Males.

**Table 4.3: Showing the Level of Study**

Level of Study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100 Level	90	30.0
200 Level	85	28.3
300 Level	40	13.3
400 Level	20	6.7
500 Level (where applicable)	30	10.0
Postgraduate	35	11.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024)

The above table shows that 90 (30.0%) of the were in 100Level towards level of study.

**Table 4.4: Showing the Faculty**

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Faculty of Sciences	25	8.3
Faculty of Social Sciences	80	26.7
Faculty of Health Sciences	30	10.0
Faculty of Engineering	60	20.0
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	20	6.7
Faculty of Business Administration	40	13.3
Other	45	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024)

The above table shows that 80 (26.7%) of the respondents were in Faculty of Social Sciences.

**Table 4.5: Showing the Living Arrangement**

Living Arrangement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
On-campus hostel	110	36.7
Off-campus private accommodation	120	40.0
Living with family/relatives	40	13.3
Other	30	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024)

The above table shows that 120 (40.0%) of the respondents were in Off-campus private accommodation.

### Result of the Data Analysis Concerning Research Question

**Research Question 1:** What is the prevalence of sleeping pill use among students of Imo State University, Owerri?

**Table 4.6: showing the prevalence of sleeping pill use among students of Imo State University, Owerri.**

ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>How frequently do you use sleeping pills</b>		
Never	200	66.7
Occasionally (once or twice a month)	140	46.7
Frequently (once or twice a week)	40	13.3
Daily	20	6.7
<b>How long have you been using sleeping pills</b>		
I do not use sleeping pills	120	40.0
Less than 1 month	50	16.7
1-6 Months	55	18.3
7 Months to 1 Year	35	11.7
More than 1 Year	40	13.3
<b>Which type of sleeping pill do you use most frequently</b>		
Over-the-counter (e.g., melatonin)	80	26.7

Prescription (e.g., benzodiazepines)	75	25.0
Herbal or natural remedies	125	41.7
I do not use sleeping pills	20	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>10.0</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024)

The above table shows that 200 (66.7%) respondents indicated never to How frequently do you use sleeping pills, 120 (40.0%) respondents indicated I do not use sleeping pills to How long have you been using sleeping pills while 125 (41.7%) respondents

indicated Herbal or natural remedies to Which type of sleeping pill do you use most frequently.

**Research Question 2:** What factors contribute to the use of sleeping pills among students (e.g., stress, anxiety, insomnia)?

**Table 4.7: Showing the factors leading to sleeping pill use among the students**

S/N	ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	<b>What are the primary reasons you use sleeping pills</b>		
	Stress from academic workload	140	46.7
	Anxiety or depression	30	10.0
	Insomnia or other sleep disorders	60	20.0
	Peer influence	65	21.7
	Other	5	1.6
2	<b>Have you tried other methods to manage sleep issues before using sleeping pills</b>		
	Yes, relaxation techniques (e.g., yoga, meditation)	145	48.3
	Yes, adjusting sleep schedule	55	18.3
	Yes, herbal remedies	20	6.7
	No, I went directly to sleeping pills	40	13.3
	Not applicable	40	13.3
3	<b>Do you believe external factors (e.g., family issues, financial stress) contribute to your need for sleeping pills</b>		
	Strongly agree	40	13.3
	Agree	50	16.7
	Neutral	80	26.7
	Disagree	75	25.0
	Strongly Disagree	55	18.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field survey, 2024)

The above table shows that 140 (46.7%) respondents indicated Stress from academic workload to What are the primary reasons you use sleeping pills, 145 (48.3%) respondents indicated Yes, relaxation techniques (e.g., yoga, meditation) to Have you tried other methods to manage sleep issues before using sleeping pills, 80 (26.7%) respondents indicated Neutral

to Do you believe external factors (e.g., family issues, financial stress) contribute to your need for sleeping pills.

**Research Question 3:** How aware are students of the potential risks and side effects of sleeping pill use?

**Table 4.8: Showing the students' knowledge and awareness of the side effects and risks of sleeping pill use**

S/N	ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	<b>Are you aware of the potential side effects of using sleeping pills (e.g., drowsiness, dependency, memory loss)</b>		
	Yes	120	30.0
	No	100	25.0
	Not sure	180	45.0
2	<b>Have you experienced any side effects from using sleeping pills</b>		
	Yes, occasionally	60	20.0
	Yes, frequently	100	33.3
	No, I have not experienced any side effects	120	40.0
	I do not use sleeping pills	20	6.7



3	<b>How do you obtain information on the risks associated with sleeping pills</b>		
	From a healthcare professional		
	Online research	40	13.3
	From friends or family	100	33.3
	I am not aware of any risks	160	53.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table shows that 180 (45%) of the respondents indicated Not sure to Are you aware of the potential side effects of using sleeping pills (e.g., drowsiness, dependency, memory loss), 120 (40.0%) of the respondents indicated No, I have not experienced any side effects to Have you experienced any side effects

from using sleeping pills, 160 (53.3%) of the respondents indicated From friends or family to How do you obtain information on the risks associated with sleeping pills.

**Research Question 4:** What is the relationship between sleeping pill use and students' academic performance?

**Table 4.9: Showing the impact of sleeping pill use on students' academic performance and daily functioning**

S/N	ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	<b>How do you think sleeping pill use affects your academic performance</b>		
	It improves my academic performance by helping me sleep better	55	18.3
	It negatively affects my academic performance due to drowsiness or fatigue.	130	43.3
	No noticeable impact on my academic performance	50	16.7
	I do not use sleeping pills	65	21.7
2	<b>Do you have difficulty concentrating or staying awake during lectures or academic activities due to sleeping pill use</b>		
	Yes, frequently	180	60.0
	Yes, occasionally	25	8.3
	No, I do not have such difficulties	40	13.3
	I do not use sleeping pills	55	18.4
3	<b>How has sleeping pill use affected your overall daily functioning (e.g., physical activity, social interactions)</b>		
	It has improved my daily functioning	105	35.0
	It has negatively affected my daily functioning	75	25.0
	No noticeable impact on my daily functioning	35	11.7
	I do not use sleeping pills	85	28.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table shows that 130 (43.3%) of the respondents indicated It negatively affects my academic performance due to drowsiness or fatigue to How do you think sleeping pill use affects your academic performance, 180 (60.0%) of the respondents indicated Yes, frequently to Do you have difficulty concentrating or staying awake during lectures or academic activities due to sleeping pill use, 105 (35.0%) of the respondents indicated It has improved my daily functioning to How has sleeping pill use affected your overall daily functioning (e.g., physical activity, social interactions).

## DISCUSSION

Majority 114 (38.0%) of the respondents were between 30 years and Above, 160 (53.3%) of the respondents were Males, 90 (30.0%) of the were in 100Level towards level of study, 80 (26.7%) of the respondents were in Faculty of Social Sciences, and 120 (40.0%) of the respondents were in Off-campus private accommodation. Majority 200 (66.7%) respondents indicated never to How frequently do you use sleeping pills, 120 (40.0%) respondents indicated I do not use sleeping pills to How long have you been using sleeping

pills while 125 (41.7%) respondents indicated Herbal or natural remedies to Which type of sleeping pill do you use most frequently. Majority 140 (46.7%) respondents indicated Stress from academic workload to What are the primary reasons you use sleeping pills, 145 (48.3%) respondents indicated Yes, relaxation techniques (e.g., yoga, meditation) to Have you tried other methods to manage sleep issues before using sleeping pills, 80 (26.7%) respondents indicated Neutral to Do you believe external factors (e.g., family issues, financial stress) contribute to your need for sleeping pills. Majority 180 (45%) of the respondents indicated Not sure to Are you aware of the potential side effects of using sleeping pills (e.g., drowsiness, dependency, memory loss), 120 (40.0%) of the respondents indicated No, I have not experienced any side effects to Have you experienced any side effects from using sleeping pills, 160 (53.3%) of the respondents indicated From friends or family to How do you obtain information on the risks associated with sleeping pills.

Majority 130 (43.3%) of the respondents indicated It negatively affects my academic performance due to drowsiness or fatigue to How do you think

sleeping pill use affects your academic performance, 180 (60.0%) of the respondents indicated Yes, frequently to Do you have difficulty concentrating or staying awake during lectures or academic activities due to sleeping pill use, 105 (35.0%) of the respondents indicated It has improved my daily functioning to How has sleeping pill use affected your overall daily functioning (e.g., physical activity, social interactions).

The study on the use of sleeping pills and its impact among students at Imo State University (IMSU) provides insight into the prevalence, factors leading to use, awareness of risks, and effects on academic and daily life among this population. With a notable portion of the respondents over 30 years old (38%) and more than half (53.3%) being male, the data suggests that older students and males are a significant demographic in the use of sleep aids. While the majority of students (66.7%) reported never using sleeping pills and 40% stated they do not currently use them, there remains a sizeable group who engage with sleep aids, with 41.7% favoring herbal or natural remedies. This tendency suggests a preference for less pharmaceutical options when students do resort to aids for sleep management, potentially influenced by cultural attitudes towards traditional remedies [13].

The factors leading to sleeping pill use were largely academic, with 46.7% citing stress from their academic workload as the primary motivator. Academic stress is a common pressure in university life and has been shown to contribute significantly to sleep disturbances [14]. Interestingly, despite reliance on sleep aids, nearly half (48.3%) of the respondents indicated attempts at non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as relaxation techniques. This suggests that while academic demands push students toward seeking sleep aids, there is also an awareness of and engagement with alternative coping mechanisms, although these may be insufficient for some under high-stress situations.

Regarding knowledge and awareness of the side effects of sleeping pills, the study reveals a concerning gap. Nearly half (45%) of students were uncertain about the side effects, and 53.3% indicated that they primarily receive information from friends or family. This lack of formal education on the risks of sleeping pill use could lead to uninformed usage patterns, potentially increasing the risk of dependency or other adverse outcomes [15].

Furthermore, with 40% of students having no prior experience with side effects, there may be a perception that sleeping pills are generally safe, which might contribute to less caution when using these aids.

The study also examined the impact of sleeping pill use on academic performance and daily functioning. A significant number of students (43.3%) reported that sleeping pill use negatively affected their academic performance due to symptoms such as drowsiness and

fatigue. Additionally, 60% noted frequent difficulty concentrating or staying awake during academic activities, underscoring the possible trade-off between immediate relief from sleep issues and the subsequent effects on mental alertness and academic engagement [16]. However, in contrast, 35% indicated an improvement in their daily functioning, particularly in areas such as physical activity and social interactions. This dichotomy suggests that while sleeping pills may provide temporary relief that helps some students, it also comes with costs that could impair academic success and cognitive functioning in others.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that while sleeping pill use among IMSU students is not widespread, it is primarily influenced by academic stress, and those who do use sleep aids often prefer herbal or natural remedies. However, a significant number of students lack adequate knowledge about the potential risks associated with sleeping pill use, which may expose them to unintended health consequences, particularly if dependency or misuse arises. Additionally, sleeping pill use has a mixed impact on students' academic performance and daily functioning. Some students report a negative effect on their academic performance, citing drowsiness and difficulty concentrating, while others believe it improves their daily functioning by helping them manage sleep-related challenges. These findings indicate a need for balanced approaches to sleep management within the student population, combining stress reduction with education on safe, effective sleep practices.

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