

## THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SLEEP AND ANXIETY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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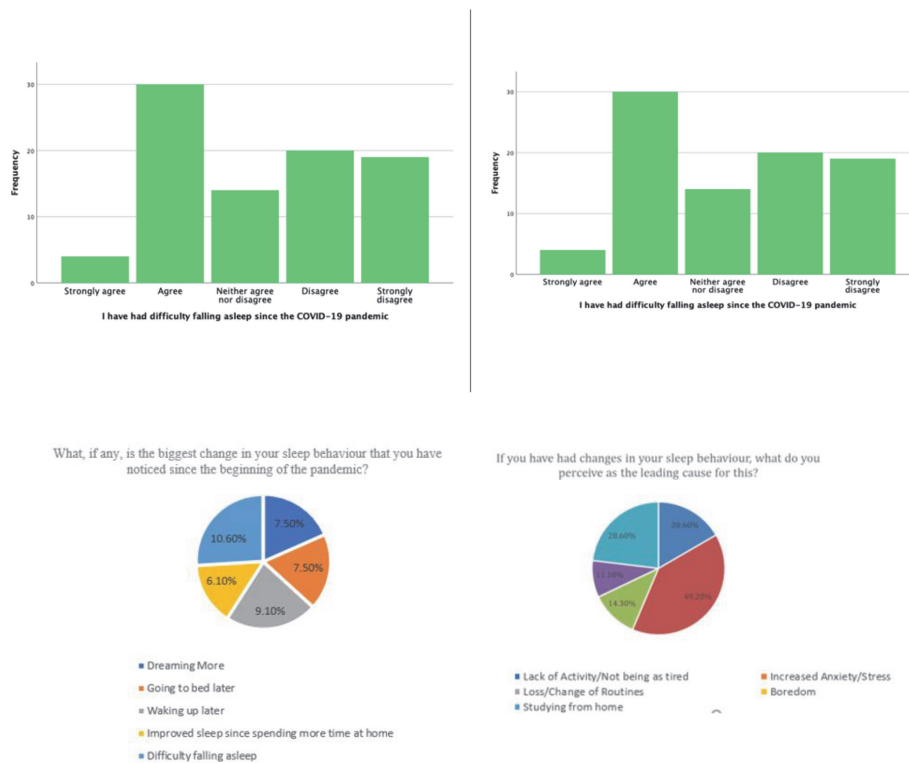
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**Introduction** Since the COVID-19 pandemic began lockdowns, isolation periods and unprecedented restrictions have been common. These have had an especially disruptive effect on students. The psychological impacts of these restrictions are still emerging, but research from earlier in the pandemic demonstrated increased negative sleep symptoms concurrent with reductions in mental health. However, it is important to understand the legacy of these effects as restrictions ease. The relationships between Fear of COVID, anxiety levels and sleep habits, were explored. It was predicted that anxiety and poor sleep would remain high and would be associated with each other and fear of COVID.

**Method** An online survey with UK students (N=87) explored the relationships between Fear of COVID, anxiety (State Trait Anxiety Index) and sleep patterns (PSQI). Pandemic specific questions from Pérez-Carbonell et al (2021), conducted at the start of the pandemic, were also included.

**Results** Fear of COVID was high and, as predicted, related to state (but not trait) anxiety; but not global PSQI scores. The subjective sleep quality component correlated with Fear of COVID ( $r(85) = 0.267, p = 0.012$ ), suggesting that fear of COVID, is still associated with sleep quality. Furthermore, changes in self-reported sleep habits were evident. The majority of participants reported having obtained less sleep (figure 1), and experienced great difficulty falling asleep since the pandemic began (figure 2). Moreover, 50% of participants perceived changes in their sleep (figure 3) and increased anxiety and stress as the primary cause of changes of these changes (figure 4) consistent with research conducted earlier in the pandemic.

**Implications** The findings add to the existing body of literature surrounding COVID-19, it's impact on university students' mental health, and sleep patterns. Future research is needed to monitor the direction and causality of the ongoing effects of restrictions as a result of COVID19, and the impact on student wellbeing, ensuring appropriate and supportive provisions are implemented.



**Abstract 58 Figure 1** Supplementary data In addition to the PSQI questions from Pérez-Carbonell et al (2021) were included. The majority of students reported less sleep since the pandemic began, in addition to greater difficulty falling asleep. These results are consistent with Pérez-Carbonell et al (2021) extending the findings beyond a heterogeneous sample, to specific sample of UK students