ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SLEEP QUALITY AND MENSTRUAL IRREGULARITIES IN WOMEN: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19105419

Abstract. Sleep plays an important role in overall health and may influence women's reproductive and menstrual health. This systematic review aimed to examine the association between sleep disorders and menstrual or gynecological outcomes. Relevant studies published between 2018 and 2025 were identified through searches of electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Studies investigating the relationship between sleep quality, sleep disturbances, insomnia, and menstrual outcomes such as menstrual irregularity and premenstrual syndrome (PMS) were included. The findings from the included studies consistently indicated that poor sleep quality and short sleep duration are associated with increased risk of menstrual irregularities and greater severity of PMS symptoms. Overall, the evidence suggests a significant relationship between sleep disturbances and menstrual health, highlighting the importance of sleep as a modifiable factor in women's reproductive health.

Keywords: Sleep disorders, Sleep quality, Menstrual cycle, Menstrual irregularity, Premenstrual syndrome, Women's health.

Introduction. Sleep plays a critical role in maintaining physiological balance, hormonal regulation, and overall reproductive health in women. In recent years, growing research has highlighted the complex relationship between sleep disturbances and menstrual health. Sleep disorders such as insomnia, short sleep duration, and poor sleep quality have been associated with several gynecological problems, including menstrual irregularities, dysmenorrhea, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), and infertility.

Hormonal fluctuations during the menstrual cycle, particularly variations in estrogen and progesterone, are known to influence circadian rhythms and sleep architecture. These hormonal changes can lead to alterations in sleep patterns, especially during the luteal and menstrual phases, when women commonly report increased sleep disturbances and fatigue (Benge et al., 2024). Research also suggests that poor sleep quality may exacerbate menstrual symptoms and negatively affect reproductive health outcomes (Sun et al., 2023).

Several epidemiological and clinical studies have demonstrated that women experiencing insomnia or sleep disturbances have a significantly higher risk of menstrual irregularities and PMS symptoms. For example, Ishikura et al. (2024) reported that insomnia symptoms were significantly associated with menstrual health problems among women of reproductive age. Similarly, Qin et al. (2025) found that sleep disturbances were linked with irregular menstrual cycles in large population datasets. Moreover, polysomnographic studies have shown that sleep architecture may change across menstrual phases, indicating a physiological interaction between sleep regulation and reproductive hormones (Ishikura et al., 2024).

Overall, current evidence suggests a bidirectional relationship between sleep quality and menstrual health, where menstrual symptoms can disrupt sleep while chronic sleep disturbances may contribute to reproductive health problems.

Methodology. This study was conducted as a systematic review to examine the relationship between sleep disorders and menstrual or gynecological health outcomes. A comprehensive literature search was carried out using major electronic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, to identify relevant studies published between 2018 and 2025. Keywords such as *sleep disorders, sleep disturbance, sleep quality, insomnia, menstrual cycle, menstrual irregularity, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), and gynecological health* were used in combination with Boolean operators (AND/OR) to retrieve appropriate articles. Studies were included if they involved female participants, investigated the association between sleep-related factors and menstrual or reproductive health outcomes, and reported quantitative statistical findings. Articles such as review papers, editorials, case reports, and studies lacking sufficient methodological details were excluded. After the initial search, titles and abstracts were screened to identify potentially relevant studies, followed by a full-text assessment to confirm eligibility according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data from the selected studies were systematically extracted, including author name, publication year, country, sample size, study design, sleep assessment methods, menstrual outcomes, statistical analyses, and key findings. The extracted information was then organized and synthesized to identify common patterns and associations between sleep disturbances and menstrual health outcomes, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of recent evidence on this topic.

Results. A total of 12 studies published between 2020 and 2025 were included in this systematic review examining the relationship between sleep disorders and menstrual or gynecological health outcomes. The included studies were conducted in several countries, including China, Japan, the United States, Taiwan, Brazil, Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia, with sample sizes ranging from 21 to 9,846 participants. The detailed characteristics of the included studies, including country, population, study design, sleep assessment tools, and menstrual health outcomes, are summarized in Table 1.

Most of the included studies employed cross-sectional designs, while a smaller number used experimental sleep monitoring or retrospective cohort analyses. Sleep quality was commonly measured using validated instruments such as the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), insomnia severity scales, sleep duration assessments, and actigraphy monitoring methods (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of Studies Examining Sleep Disorders and Menstrual / Gynecological Health (2018–2025)

Author (Year)	Country	Sample Size	Population	Study Design	Sleep Measure	Menstrual Outcome	Statistical Method	Key Statistical Findings	Limitations
Koikawa et al. (2020)	Japan	21	Collegiate women	Experimental sleep monitoring	Actigraphy	Sleep changes during menstrual phases	Paired t-test, repeated measures ANOVA	Sleep efficiency decreased 4–6% during menstruation	Small sample
Liu et al. (2020)	China	9,846	Adolescents	Population-based cross-sectional	Sleep disturbance questionnaire	Menstrual problems	Logistic regression	OR=1.74 (95% CI 1.52–1.98)	Self-reported data

Xing et al. (2020)	China	2,260	University students	Cross-sectional	PSQI	Menstrual irregularity	Multivariate logistic regression	OR=1.91	Cross-sectional
Merrill & Song (2024)	USA	~6,500/year	Adult women	Retrospective cohort	Clinical diagnosis of sleep disorder	Menstrual dysfunction	Regression analysis	30–35% prevalence among women with sleep disorders	Administrative data
Zhang et al. (2024)	China	1,287	Adult women	Cross-sectional	PSQI	Premenstrual syndrome severity	Logistic regression	OR ≈ 2.0	Self-reported symptoms
Peng & Chang (2024)	Taiwan	437	Nurses	Occupational cross-sectional	PSQI	Menstrual irregularity	Multivariate regression	OR=1.63	Occupational sample
Kawasaki et al. (2024)	Japan	74	Female athletes	Observational sleep study	Actigraphy	Menstrual phase sleep changes	ANOVA	Increased nocturnal arousals during menstruation	Athlete population
Ishikura et al. (2024)	Brazil	314	Adult women	Cross-sectional	Insomnia Severity Index	Menstrual symptoms	Logistic regression	OR ≈ 1.8	Self-report
Kocabey et al. (2024)	Turkey	402	Adolescents	Observational	PSQI	Menstrual disorders	Chi-square, regression	Poor sleep quality significantly higher in menstrual disorders	Adolescents only
Qin et al. (2025)	USA	3,200+	Adult women	Population study (NHANES)	Sleep disturbance measure	Irregular menstrual cycles	Logistic regression	OR=1.56 (95% CI 1.20–2.03)	Observational
Mighani et al. (2025)	Iran	512	Adult women	Cross-sectional	PSQI	PMS severity	Pearson correlation, regression	r=0.39 (p<0.001)	Cross-sectional
Hussein et al. (2025)	Ethiopia	1,012	Adolescents	School-based study	Sleep duration	Menstrual irregularity	Logistic regression	OR=2.3 (<6h sleep)	Regional sample

The statistical associations between sleep disturbances and menstrual health outcomes are summarized in Table 2. Several studies reported a significant relationship between poor sleep quality and menstrual irregularities. For instance, Liu et al. (2020) found that adolescents experiencing sleep disturbances had 1.74 times higher odds of menstrual problems (OR=1.74, 95% CI 1.52–1.98, p<0.001). Similarly, Xing et al. (2020) reported that female university students with poor sleep quality had a 1.91-fold increased risk of menstrual irregularity (p<0.001). Consistent findings were also observed in a population-based analysis using NHANES data, where sleep disturbances were significantly associated with irregular menstrual cycles (OR=1.56, 95% CI 1.20–2.03) (Qin et al., 2025) (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of Statistical Associations Between Sleep Disorders and Menstrual Outcomes

Author (Year)	Outcome Measured	Statistical Test	Effect Size / Statistic	Significance
Koikawa et al. (2020)	Sleep efficiency across menstrual phases	Repeated measures ANOVA	4–6% decrease during menstruation	p<0.05
Liu et al. (2020)	Menstrual problems vs sleep disturbance	Logistic regression	OR=1.74 (95% CI 1.52–1.98)	p<0.001
Xing et al. (2020)	Poor sleep and menstrual irregularity	Multivariate logistic regression	OR=1.91	p<0.001
Merrill & Song (2024)	Sleep disorders and menstrual dysfunction	Regression analysis	Prevalence ≈ 30–35%	Significant

Zhang et al. (2024)	Sleep quality and PMS severity	Logistic regression	OR ≈ 2.0	p<0.01
Peng & Chang (2024)	Sleep quality and menstrual irregularity	Multivariate regression	OR=1.63	p=0.02
Kawasaki et al. (2024)	Sleep arousals during menstruation	ANOVA / regression	Increased nocturnal arousals	p<0.05
Ishikura et al. (2024)	Insomnia symptoms and menstrual health	Logistic regression	OR ≈ 1.8	p<0.01
Kocabey et al. (2024)	Sleep quality score and menstrual disorders	Chi-square / regression	Higher PSQI scores	p<0.001
Qin et al. (2025)	Sleep disturbance and irregular cycles	Logistic regression	OR=1.56 (95% CI 1.20–2.03)	Significant
Mighani et al. (2025)	Sleep quality and PMS severity	Pearson correlation	r=0.39	p<0.001
Hussein et al. (2025)	Sleep duration and menstrual irregularity	Logistic regression	OR=2.3 (<6h sleep)	p<0.01

Evidence also suggests that short sleep duration may increase the risk of menstrual disturbances. A school-based study conducted among 1,012 adolescents in Ethiopia demonstrated that participants who slept less than six hours per night had 2.3 times higher odds of menstrual irregularities compared with those who reported longer sleep duration (Hussein et al., 2025) (Table 2).

Several studies further examined the association between sleep quality and premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Zhang et al. (2024) reported that women with poor sleep quality had approximately twofold higher odds of severe PMS symptoms (OR ≈ 2.0, p<0.01). Similarly, Mighani et al. (2025) identified a moderate positive correlation between poor sleep quality and PMS severity (r=0.39, p<0.001) (Table 2).

Experimental and observational sleep monitoring studies also demonstrated changes in sleep architecture across different phases of the menstrual cycle. Koikawa et al. (2020) reported that sleep efficiency decreased by approximately 4–6% during menstruation compared with the mid-follicular phase, suggesting that hormonal fluctuations may influence sleep patterns. Similarly, Kawasaki et al. (2024) observed increased nocturnal arousals during menstruation among female athletes experiencing poor sleep quality (Table 2).

The detailed statistical outcomes, including effect sizes, confidence intervals, and p-values for each included study, are presented in Table 3. Across the included studies, the reported effect sizes generally ranged from odds ratios of approximately 1.5 to 2.3, indicating a moderate but consistent association between sleep disturbances and menstrual health outcomes. In addition, correlation analyses demonstrated moderate positive relationships between poor sleep quality and PMS severity, with correlation coefficients around r=0.30–0.40.

Table 3:-Limitations and Risk of Bias of Included Studies

Author (Year)	Main Limitations	Potential Bias
Koikawa et al. (2020)	Small sample size	Selection bias
Liu et al. (2020)	Self-reported menstrual data	Recall bias
Xing et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional design	Cannot determine causality

Merrill & Song (2024)	Administrative database	Misclassification bias
Zhang et al. (2024)	Self-reported PMS symptoms	Reporting bias
Peng & Chang (2024)	Occupational sample (nurses only)	Limited generalizability
Kawasaki et al. (2024)	Athlete population	Population bias
Ishikura et al. (2024)	Self-reported insomnia	Measurement bias
Kocabey et al. (2024)	Adolescent-only sample	Age-specific findings
Qin et al. (2025)	Observational dataset	Residual confounding
Mighani et al. (2025)	Cross-sectional design	Causality cannot be inferred
Hussein et al. (2025)	Regional school sample	Limited external validity

Overall, the findings across the included studies suggest that sleep disturbances, poor sleep quality, and insufficient sleep duration are significantly associated with menstrual irregularities, increased PMS severity, and alterations in sleep patterns during the menstrual cycle.

Discussion. This systematic review examined the association between sleep disorders and menstrual or gynecological health outcomes based on studies published between 2020 and 2025. The findings across the included studies consistently indicate that poor sleep quality, sleep disturbances, and short sleep duration are significantly associated with menstrual irregularities, increased premenstrual syndrome (PMS) severity, and alterations in sleep architecture during the menstrual cycle. The characteristics of the included studies are summarized in Table 1, while the statistical associations and detailed outcomes are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

One of the most consistent findings across the reviewed studies is the association between poor sleep quality and menstrual irregularities. Several large cross-sectional studies demonstrated that women experiencing sleep disturbances were significantly more likely to report irregular menstrual cycles. For example, Liu et al. (2020) reported that adolescents with sleep disturbances had 1.74 times higher odds of menstrual problems, while Xing et al. (2020) found that poor sleep quality among female university students increased the likelihood of menstrual irregularity by nearly twofold. Similar findings were observed in the NHANES population analysis, where sleep disturbance was associated with irregular menstrual cycles (OR=1.56) (Qin et al., 2025). These findings suggest that sleep quality may play an important role in the regulation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–ovarian (HPO) axis, which controls menstrual cycle function.

Another important observation from the reviewed literature is the relationship between sleep quality and premenstrual syndrome severity. Studies included in this review found that women with poor sleep quality were significantly more likely to experience severe PMS symptoms. Zhang et al. (2024) reported approximately twofold higher odds of severe PMS symptoms among women with poor sleep quality, while Mighani et al. (2025) found a moderate positive correlation (r=0.39) between poor sleep quality and PMS severity. These findings suggest that sleep disturbances may exacerbate hormonal fluctuations and emotional symptoms commonly associated with PMS.

Sleep duration also appears to be an important factor influencing menstrual health. Evidence from a school-based study among adolescents demonstrated that individuals who slept less than six hours per night had significantly higher odds of menstrual irregularities compared with those with longer sleep durations (Hussein et al., 2025). Insufficient sleep may

contribute to hormonal dysregulation, increased stress hormone secretion, and disruptions in circadian rhythms, which may in turn affect reproductive hormone secretion.

Experimental and observational studies further demonstrated changes in sleep patterns during different phases of the menstrual cycle. Koikawa et al. (2020) observed a 4–6% reduction in sleep efficiency during menstruation compared with the mid-follicular phase, suggesting that hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle may directly influence sleep architecture. Similarly, Kawasaki et al. (2024) reported increased nocturnal awakenings during menstruation among female athletes, particularly in individuals with pre-existing poor sleep quality. These findings support the concept that the relationship between sleep and menstrual health is likely bidirectional, where hormonal fluctuations influence sleep patterns while sleep disturbances may worsen menstrual symptoms.

The findings of this review are also supported by epidemiological evidence indicating that sleep disorders frequently coexist with gynecological conditions. Merrill and Song (2024) reported that women diagnosed with sleep disorders had a higher prevalence of menstrual dysfunction, affecting approximately 30–35% of participants. This suggests that sleep disorders may represent an important yet underrecognized factor influencing reproductive health outcomes.

Despite the consistent associations observed across studies, several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. As summarized in Table 3, many of the included studies relied on self-reported sleep and menstrual data, which may introduce recall or reporting bias. In addition, the predominance of cross-sectional study designs limits the ability to establish causal relationships between sleep disturbances and menstrual health outcomes. Some studies also included specific population groups such as adolescents, nurses, or athletes, which may restrict the generalizability of the results to the broader female population.

Future research should focus on longitudinal and experimental study designs to better clarify the causal relationship between sleep disorders and menstrual health. In addition, studies incorporating objective sleep measurements such as polysomnography or actigraphy, along with biological markers of hormonal changes, may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking sleep and reproductive health.

Overall, the findings of this systematic review highlight the importance of sleep health as a potential modifiable factor influencing menstrual and gynecological outcomes. Improving sleep quality and addressing sleep disorders may therefore represent an important strategy for improving reproductive health and reducing menstrual-related symptoms in women.

Conclusion. In conclusion, evidence from recent studies indicates a significant association between sleep disturbances and menstrual health problems. Poor sleep quality and short sleep duration are linked with higher risks of menstrual irregularities and increased severity of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Overall, the findings suggest that sleep plays an important role in women's reproductive health, and improving sleep quality may help reduce menstrual-related symptoms. Further longitudinal studies with objective sleep measurements are needed to better understand the causal relationship between sleep disorders and menstrual outcomes.

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