ABSTRACT BOOK

34th International Medical Students' Conference

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DAYTIME NAPPING AS A TOOL FOR MENTAL RESILIENCE IN WARTIME UKRAINE

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Introduction

Sleep is a crucial aspect of human life, essential for the proper functioning of internal organs and the overall maintenance of well-being. While there are numerous roles of sleep, many of which are still being explored, the primary functions can be categorized into three main areas: enhancing brain performance, regulating metabolic processes, and supporting physical recovery. Throughout history, napping has been a tool for ancient populations, enabling them to stay alert and ensure their survival. Research by Czeisler et al. (2005) suggests that short periods of daytime sleep may have evolved as a survival strategy, allowing early humans to remain vigilant against predators while still getting the rest they needed. By breaking sleep into shorter segments, these early humans improved their alertness and cognitive function during critical moments, ultimately boosting their chances of survival. This highlights that napping is not just a modern convenience but a deeply rooted behavioral adaptation that has persisted through human evolution.

Research by Samson et al. (2017) indicates that members of the Hadza tribe dedicate less than an hour on average to daily naps, which reportedly helps them manage exhaustion, maintain stronger circadian rhythms, and achieve lower body mass indices (BMI) [2]. This practice allows them to sustain the energy needed for their hunter-gatherer lifestyle throughout the day. In contemporary society, napping continues to be widely practiced in various cultures. A prime example is the siesta, a Spanish tradition characterized by a brief rest after a hearty meal. The siesta enables individuals to recharge, especially in warmer climates, and improves productivity. Despite modern lifestyles leading to a decline in this tradition, its health benefits remain evident. A 2016 survey revealed that fewer than 18% of Spaniards regularly take siestas, while over 50% reported never engaging in this practice.

Another effective form of daytime rest is the Japanese concept of inemuri, which involves napping during work or daily activities, such as meetings, commutes, or waiting for transport. While this practice might be viewed as laziness, it actually promotes well-being by allowing individuals to recover energy without fully disengaging from their social or professional responsibilities. In recent years, the idea of napping during work hours has gained traction globally, with companies like Google, Apple, Nike, BASF, Opel, The Huffington Post, and Procter & Gamble providing dedicated sleep spaces or pods for their employees.

Given that napping continues to offer benefits even within the monophasic sleep patterns of Western societies, it is increasingly important to understand how napping can be utilized as a restorative tool. For instance, in Ukraine, the ongoing war has disrupted nighttime sleep for many individuals, highlighting the importance of prioritizing sleep hygiene, incorporating daytime naps into daily routines, and adopting preventive measures to maintain both

physical and mental resilience.

Aim of the study

The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the effects of sleep on cognitive functioning in civilians undergoing the constant stress of war and to investigate the current sleep patterns within said population. Additionally gaining insights into the relationship between sleep duration and cognitive performance and contributing to a deeper understanding of the role sleep plays in mental capabilities.

Materials and methods

A combination of research methodologies was employed, including analytical, descriptive, and sociological surveys. A survey was administered via Google Forms to assess sleep patterns, which included a sample of 67 participants, the majority of whom were aged between 20 and 30 years. Additionally, an experimental study was conducted to examine the impact of sleep on memory retention. In this experiment, two groups of 15 individuals each were presented with a list of 10 unrelated words for a duration of 1 to 2 minutes. Subsequently, one group was instructed to take a nap for 1 hour, while the other group continued with their daily activities. Upon the conclusion of the hour, both groups were required to recite the list of words presented at the beginning of the experiment.

Results

A total of 67 respondents participated in the study, with a gender distribution of 58.6% female and 41.4% male. The majority of participants reported typical waking times between 08:00 and 09:00 AM, and bedtime was predominantly between 11:00PM and midnight. Notably, 78.5% of respondents demonstrated awareness of the various phases and cycles of sleep. In the context of physical activity, 31.8% of respondents engaged in exercise during the morning hours, 29.6% during the evening, and 21.9% expressed a desire to engage in this activity but reported time constraints as a barrier. Concerning room ventilation, 32.3% of participants indicated they consistently ventilate their sleeping environment prior to retiring for the night, whereas 68.7% did not adhere to this practice regularly. Participants' awareness of the health implications of disrupted sleep was reported by 27.6%, while 68.9% recognized the adverse effects associated with chronic sleep deprivation [1]. Alarmingly, 56.8% of respondents indicated they do not awaken in response to air raid alarms, and 65.9% reported that they do not seek shelter during nighttime alerts. Furthermore, 45.8% of participants do not attempt to compensate for lost sleep through daytime napping. With respect to the phenomenon of dreaming, 56.8% of respondents reported experiencing dreams. However, only 38.9% indicated feeling rested upon awakening. A substantial majority, 68.7%, acknowledged the impact of sleep on cognitive functions, particularly memory, while 65.9% expressed awareness of sleep prevention factors.

In terms of memory retention as assessed in the study, among participants who remained awake after viewing the material, 18.9% recalled 9-10 words, 32.5% recalled 6-8 words, and 49.6% recalled fewer than 5 words. Conversely, among participants

who had the opportunity to sleep, 53.3% remembered 9-10 words, 40%.

Conclusions

The findings of this study underscore the vital role of daytime napping in enhancing cognitive performance and mental resilience, particularly in the context of ongoing conflict. Participants who engaged in napping exhibited significantly improved memory retention compared to those who did not, highlighting the restorative benefits of sleep. However, despite the recognition of sleep's importance, many individuals in this study reported inadequate sleep practices, resulting in negative health outcomes such as irritability, tension, and fatigue. These issues are compounded in high-stress environments, emphasizing the need for effective sleep hygiene. To mitigate these challenges, it is crucial to promote practices such as ensuring proper ventilation, engaging in light physical activity before bedtime, monitoring dietary habits, and reducing screen time. By advocating for structured napping opportunities in educational institutions and workplaces, particularly in war- affected areas, we can enhance cognitive function, improve overall well-being, and foster resilience in individuals facing the stressors of conflict.

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