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Zoey Coker

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Ramifications of Sleep Deprivation on Army Soldiers

Zoey M. Coker

Scholar Program: Self-Regulation in Military Service Personnel

Research Mentor: Dr. Brian A Moore

Abstract

While hazardous and largely preventable, sleep deprivation and its negative consequences remain common in the military, more so in the U.S. Army. Sleep deprivation relates to an insufficiency of sleep duration (i.e., seven or fewer hours of sleep). The common duration of sleep among military populations is <6 hours per night, intensified during situational training. Sleep deprivation increases risks for developing behavioral health concerns such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and relates to several health consequences such as worsening traumatic brain injury (TBI) symptoms. Beyond the direct negative effects of sleep deprivation, it also poses an occupational hazard as it affects service member's focus, point of view, and overall health/readiness. Decreased readiness in combat environments is a factor directly diminishing effective and safe performance. Failure to understand a task and carry out efficient execution ultimately escalates the probability of an unsuccessful operation. There have been few attempts to withstand these repercussions, such as experimenting with a soldier's caffeine intake to improve readiness, but these efforts come with little progress. This project examines existing literature about the ramifications of sleep deprivation specifically among Army personnel, explains how behavior and resilience is connected to sleep deprivation, and addresses potential solutions to combat the persisting problem of sleep deprivation in the military.

Keywords: sleep deprivation; traumatic brain injury (TBI); posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD); military; cognitive regulation; performance efficiency; stress