

## Study finds lack of sleep contributes to prejudice and stereotyping

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Does sleepiness make one more likely to be prejudiced or to engage in stereotyping? In a recent study, Assistant Professor Sonia Ghumman from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Shidler College of Business found that individuals who lack sleep were more likely to engage in prejudice and stereotyping behavior.

Using nearly 400 undergraduate university students, Ghumman and co-researcher C.M. Barnes conducted a series of three studies to examine the relationship between sleep and prejudice using various methodologies.

In her research, Ghumman examined students' responses to various [stimuli](#) and used established scales to determine levels of sleep and [racial attitudes](#).

In the first study, students were shown a photo of a Muslim woman and asked to describe a typical day in her life. The study found that the sleepier the individuals were, the more likely they were to rely on stereotypes to describe the Muslim woman.

In the second study, students were asked to review the resumes of prospective job applicants with either stereotypically White- or Black-sounding names. The study found that the sleepier the individuals were, the more likely they were to rate the Black candidate as less qualified than the White candidate. This suggests that [sleep deprivation](#) may contribute to decision biases in the hiring process.

In her third and final study, Ghumman studied individuals' implicit associations (unconscious and automatic biases) toward Blacks and found that individuals with strong automatic biases who lack sleep engaged in more prejudice toward Blacks. This suggests that sleepiness can lead to the actual expression of unconscious biases through increased prejudice toward particular groups.

"In our research, we found that sleep functions as a self-regulatory resource that, when depleted, leaves people less able to control their thoughts, attitudes and behaviors in a non-prejudicial manner," explains Ghumman. "By having a good night's sleep and being well-rested, individuals are more likely to be able to act appropriately in situations."

According to Ghumman, there have been many studies on sleep loss that have found negative effects on behavior, mood, perception, and cognitive and motor performances. Ghumman's study continues this line of research by initially examining the role that sleep plays in regulating people's prejudicial and stereotyping behaviors.

Ghumman is an assistant professor of management and a Shidler College Faculty Fellow at the University of Hawai'i at M?noa Shidler College of Business. Her research interests include workplace diversity, religious discrimination, cross-cultural work issues, and the influence of [sleep](#) quality and quantity on workplace behaviors.

A copy of this research, "*Sleep and prejudice: A resource recovery approach*," can be found in the June 2013 issue of the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*.

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