

# Study identifies two aspects of sleep related to depression in college student athletes

June 5 2023

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A new study to be presented at the SLEEP 2023 annual meeting identified two specific facets of sleep that mediate the relationship between general sleep disturbances and depression severity in college

student athletes.

Results show that perceived [sleep quality](#) and difficulty maintaining [sleep](#) were significant mediators of this relationship. Surprisingly, neither sleep duration nor the time it takes to fall asleep was a significant mediator.

"These results shed light on which exact sleep facets underlie the relationship between sleep disturbances and depression," said lead author Kelly Kim, who is a doctoral student in clinical psychology at the University of Arizona in Tucson. "It is surprising that, although athletes commonly report low sleep duration and high sleep onset latency (especially for college student athletes), it is more so the difficulty maintaining sleep and sleep quality that drive the relationship between sleep and depression."

According to the authors, prior epidemiological research has established the general relationship between sleep disturbances and depression. However, there is a need to delineate the specific aspects of this relationship more clearly.

The study involved 993 student athletes from schools in the Pac-12. Participants completed sleep and health questionnaires. Statistical analyses were performed using parallel multiple mediator models to understand whether the relationship between [sleep disturbances](#) and [depression severity](#) was mediated by sleep duration, sleep quality, sleep onset latency, and difficulty maintaining sleep.

Kim noted that the findings are useful because they identify potential treatment targets for a widespread problem.

"The results are important because of how prevalent sleep disorders—especially insomnia—and depression are in athletes,

specifically in college student athletes," she said.

The research abstract was published recently in an online supplement of the journal *Sleep*.

**More information:** Conference: [www.sleepmeeting.org/](http://www.sleepmeeting.org/)

Kelly Kim et al, 0641 Difficulty Maintaining Sleep and Sleep Quality mediate the Relationship between Sleep Disturbances and Depression, *SLEEP* (2023). [DOI: 10.1093/sleep/zsad077.0641](https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/zsad077.0641)

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

Citation: Study identifies two aspects of sleep related to depression in college student athletes (2023, June 5) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-06-aspects-depression-college-student-athletes.html>

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