

# High prevalence of poor sleep quality among secondary school students in Malaysia

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Dear Editor,

We read with great interest, the article "Prevalence and predictors of poor sleep quality among secondary school students in Gombak District, Selangor" by Kesintha A and colleagues.<sup>1</sup> The article highlights one of the timely and critical issues that seem to be affecting the mental and physical health of adolescents. Poor sleep quality is reported to be associated with several negative outcomes including inattention, poor academic grades, behaviour problems, overweight and compromised immune system. The study by demonstrating the significant association of poor sleep quality with depression, anxiety, stress and marital status of parents, calls for the need for appropriate counseling and moral supportive care for the students.

The study by Kesintha and colleagues has to be appreciated for the structured study design and for having been executed prospectively with quite a number of sample size. While the findings of prevalence rate of poor sleep quality among the study population was reported to be 24%, a recently published study in PLOS One reports a staggering prevalence of 72.5%.<sup>2</sup> The study also has reported statistically significant association between poor sleep quality with working memory of students, which is an issue of concern considering the age group and the significance of their required academic output. Another study from Malaysia also revealed a higher prevalence of poor sleep quality as high as 64% among the late-teen students.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, as the youngsters pass through adolescence, they get exposed to prolonged screen time and technology use. Several studies have found greater association between disrupted sleep, daytime consequences as sleepiness or

disruptive behavior among adolescents with excessive screen time before going to bed. While the study by Kesintha et al, probes in to various factors as predictors of sleep quality, we feel that inclusion of screen time would have given more interesting association and outcomes. We performed a study on the possible association of screen time with sleep quality among preclinical college students in Ipoh and found that the students spent more than two hours of screen time, which was high. However, we did not find any association between their screen time and their poor sleep quality, probably due to low sample size (unpublished data). It would be of interest if the sleep quality of students has been compared between those from boarding schools and non-boarding schools because those at boarding schools are expected to have structured schedules for sleep and other activities. Also, it is to be noted that the impact of school timings of adolescents could restrict their sleep by requiring an early rising time. The schools starting times of the study population could also have played a part by requiring the students to arise at early hours relative to their typical bedtimes and circadian rhythms. Thus, larger studies should be planned in this avenue of research to improve the sleep quality of students who are the building blocks of the future society.

## REFERENCES

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