

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Relationship of Musculoskeletal System Disorders with Sleep Quality Among Office Workers

Ofis Çalışanlarında Kas İskelet Sistemi Rahatsızlıklarının Uyku Kalitesi ile İlişkisi

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of the study was to evaluate the musculoskeletal pain frequency and relationships of musculoskeletal pain with the sleep quality among office workers.

Material and Methods: This cross-sectional study included 186 office workers evaluated between April-August 2022. The data were obtained from the socio-demographic characteristics information form, the Extended-Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire, and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index.

Results: It was found that 83.3% of office workers had musculoskeletal pain and 74.7% had poor sleep quality. Knee pain ($p=0.016$; OR=3.670; 95% CI= 1.280-10.342) and lower back pain ($p=0.003$; OR=4.380; 95% CI= 1.680-11.517) were significant predictors of poor sleep quality. There was a moderate positive correlation between the number of body areas where the pain was reported and the PSQI score ($r: 0.367$, $p<0.001$). The presence of poor sleep quality was significantly higher among those who reported musculoskeletal pain than those who did not ($p=0.001$).

Conclusion: Musculoskeletal pain is common among office workers and associated with poor sleep quality. Factors that can cause the development of poor sleep quality and musculoskeletal pain among office workers should be identified, and preventive and therapeutic strategies should be developed.

Keywords: Musculoskeletal System, Pain, Sleep Quality, Workers

ÖZ

Amaç: Çalışmada ofis çalışanlarında kas iskelet sistemi ağrısı sıklığının ve kas iskelet sistemi ağrıları ile uyku kalitesi arasındaki ilişkinin değerlendirilmesi amaçlandı.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Kesitsel tipte planlanan çalışmaya Nisan-Ağustos 2022 tarihleri arasında bir üniversite kampüsünde çalışan 186 ofis çalışanı dahil edildi. Bireylere araştırmacı tarafından oluşturulan veri toplama formu, Genişletilmiş Nordic Kas İskelet Sistemi Anketi ve Pittsburgh Uyku Kalitesi İndeksi formları uygulandı.

Bulgular: Ofis çalışanlarının %83.3'ünün kas iskelet sistemi ağrısına sahip olduğu ve %74.7'sinin uyku kalitesinin kötü olduğu tespit edildi. Diz ağrısının ($p=0.016$; OR=3.670; 95% CI= 1.280- 10.342) ve bel ağrısının ($p=0.003$; OR=4.380; 95% CI= 1.680- 11.517) anlamlı şekilde kötü uyku kalitesinin prediktörü olduğu saptandı. Ağrının bildirildiği vücut bölgelerinin sayısı ile PSQI puanı arasında orta düzeyde pozitif korelasyon tespit edildi ($r: 0.367$, $p<0.001$). Kas-iskelet sistemi ağrısı bildirenlerde kötü uyku kalitesi varlığı, bildirmeyenlere göre anlamlı şekilde daha yüksekti ($p=0.001$).

Sonuç: Kas iskelet sistemi ağrıları ofis çalışanlarında oldukça yaygındır. Kas iskelet sistemi ağrıları kötü uyku kalitesi ile ilişkilidir. Ofis çalışanlarında kas iskelet sistemi ağrısı ve kötü uyku kalitesi gelişimine neden olabilecek faktörler belirlenmeli; önleyici ve tedavi edici stratejiler geliştirilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kas İskelet Sistemi, Ağrı, Çalışanlar, Uyku Kalitesi

Introduction

Work-related musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) is one of the most common occupational disease worldwide and has been recognized as an important problem since the 17th century (1). Musculoskeletal disorders are conditions that affect the musculoskeletal system and are associated with impaired physical function and pain (2). Musculoskeletal system disorders are observed at a high rate among office workers. Long-term sitting, static postures, repetitive work, computer work, and poor environmental conditions lead to the development of MSD (3). The prevalence of MSD among office workers was reported as 28.2%-58.1% in the lower back, 22.9%-49% in the neck, 37.8%-41.5% in the upper back, and 18.8%-50.2% in the shoulders (4-6). Musculoskeletal pain (MSP) can negatively affect subjective sleep quality and cause sleep disturbance due to persistent pain. Poor sleep quality makes MSP worse, resulting in a vicious cycle of sleep disturbance

and pain (7). Sleep disturbance can also impair the mental-physical health of employees, leading to anxiety or depression, lower daytime functions and quality of life, higher work-related accidents and reduced job success among employees (8).

In this study, it was aimed to evaluate the frequency of MSD among office workers and their relationship with sleep quality.

Material and Methods

Study Design: The cross-sectional study was conducted with 186 office workers at a university campus between April 2022 and August 2022.

Research Universe and Sample: The universe of the study consisted of 400 office workers aged 18 and over who had been working at the Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University campus for at least 1 month. Based on

a similar study (9), the minimum sample size was calculated as 186 office workers with an error rate of 0.05 and a power of 0.90 (PASS 2015). For the selection of the sample, a list of 400 office workers was created, and 204 office workers were invited to the study with the help of computerized random numbers taking into account a 10% unresponsiveness rate. Exclusion criteria were malignancy, neuropathic pain, inflammatory rheumatic disease, sleep apnea syndrome, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, psychiatric disease, previous orthopedic surgery, and use of sleeping pills. Five individuals with chronic disease-related pain, three with inflammatory rheumatic disease, one using sleeping pills and nine individuals with missing data collection forms were excluded (Figure 1).

Data Collection Method: The socio-demographic characteristics information form created by the researcher, the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) and the Extended Nordic Musculoskeletal System Questionnaire (NMQ-E) were distributed to the individuals selected for sampling during working hours, and the forms filled out by the office workers themselves were collected at the end.

Data Collection Tools

Socio-demographic characteristics information form consists of 15 questions regarding the demographic and clinical characteristics of the participants.

PSQI evaluates an individual's sleep quality in the last 30 days and consists of 24 questions in total. Each question is evaluated on a scale of 0 to 3. Those with a total score of 5 or lower had "good" sleep quality while those with a score of > 5 are considered "poor" in sleep quality (10).

NMQ-E was used to evaluate MSD. NMQ-E asks yes/no questions regarding whether there has been ache, pain, or discomfort in nine body areas so far, within the last 12 months, within the last four weeks, and on the day of the assessment (11).

Ethical Considerations: Before the study, institutional and ethical permissions were obtained from the Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University Social and Human Science Research Ethics Committee (04.2022:07.27). Participating office workers were informed about the aim and scope of the research and their written and verbal informed consents were obtained. The study was carried out in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Statistical analyses: Analyses of the data obtained in the research were carried out using SPSS software (Version 22.0, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Frequency distributions of categorical data are reported as numbers and percentages while descriptive statistics are presented as mean \pm standard deviation for normally distributed continuous data. The normality of the distribution was examined by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. For the comparison of two independent sample means of continuous variables, the significance test of the difference between the two means was used when parametric test assumptions were satisfied. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to

examine the correlation between the variables. The chi-square test was used for ratio comparisons of the study groups for categorical variables. Logistic regression analysis was employed to determine the risk factors. A value of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results

The study included 57 female and 129 male desk office workers with an average age of 43.02 ± 8.51 years. The mean working time was 17.51 ± 9.20 years, and the daily time spent in front of the computer was 7.04 ± 1.99 hours. It was found that 83.3% of office workers (n:155) had MSP and 74.7% (n:139) had poor sleep quality. It was also found that 25.8% (n:48) of the employees took sick leave due to MSP, and 24.7% (n:46) were prevented from doing their normal work (data not shown in the table).

The percentage of women reporting MSP (94.7%) was significantly higher than that of men (78.3%) ($p=0.003$). The mean PSQI score was significantly higher among those who reported MSP (7.81 ± 2.80) compared to those who did not (5.23 ± 2.61) ($p=0.001$). The frequency of poor sleep quality was significantly higher among those who reported MSP (91.4%) ($p=0.001$). There was no significant difference between those with or without MSP for the education status, living place, marital status, smoking, alcohol use, presence of chronic disease, physical activity status, body mass index (BMI), age, length of employment and daily time spent on the computer ($p>0.05$) (Table 1).

A comparison of PSQI scores of patients grouped based on the body area where MSP was reported is presented in Table 2. The mean PSQI scores of those who had pain in the neck, shoulder, lower back, knee, and ankle were significantly higher than those without pain in those areas ($p = 0.041$, $p = 0.001$, $p = 0.001$, $p = 0.001$, $p = 0.042$, respectively). The mean PSQI scores of those with and without pain in the elbow, wrist, upper back, and hip region, on the other hand, were similar ($p>0.05$, Table 2).

It was revealed that 48.9% of the individuals participating in the study had pain in the neck, 45.2% in the lower back, 29.6% in the shoulder, 29.6% in the knee, 25.8% in the upper back, 23.7% in the ankle, 15.6% in the wrist, 14.5% in the hip and 8.6% in the elbow. Of the individuals included in the study, 25.8% (n=48) reported pain in one body area, while 3.2% reported pain in nine body regions. There was a moderate positive correlation between the number of body areas where the pain was reported and the PSQI score ($r=0.367$, $p<0.001$) (Figure 2).

Binary logistic regression performed on poor sleep quality provided a significant model (likelihood ratio: chi-squared 176.777, $p < 0.006$, Nagelkerke's $R^2=0.243$). Results showed that knee pain ($p=0.016$; OR=3.670; 95% CI = 1.280-10.342) and lower back pain ($p=0.003$; OR=4.380; 95% CI= 1.680-11.517) were significant predictors of poor sleep quality (Figure 3). Gender, ankle pain, hip pain, wrist pain, elbow pain, upper back pain, shoulder pain, neck pain, total time

spent in front of the computer, alcohol consumption, ex-smoker, and current smoker status, BMI, and age were not significant predictors of poor sleep quality ($p>0.05$).

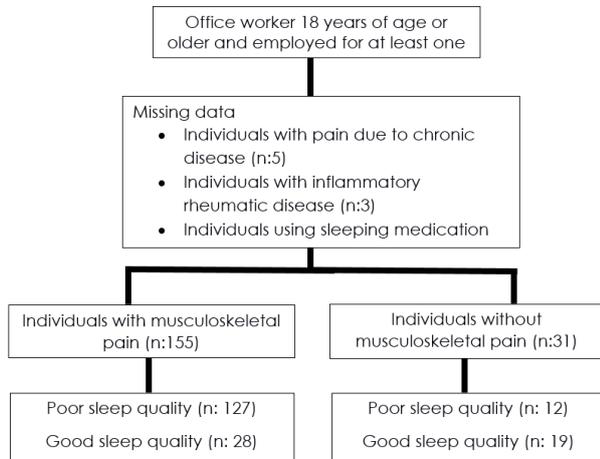


Figure 1. The study flowchart

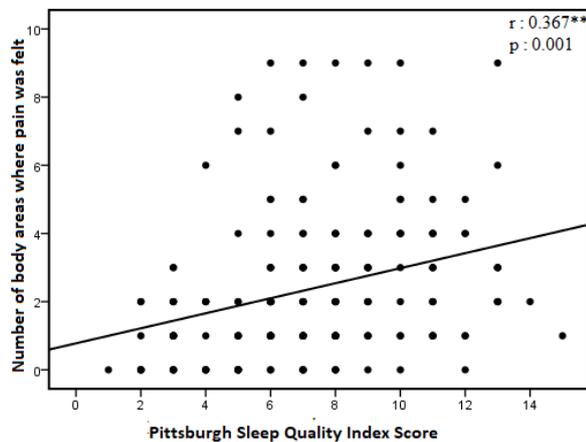


Figure 2. Relationship between PSQI score and the number of body areas where pain was felt. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used. **Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (two-tailed).

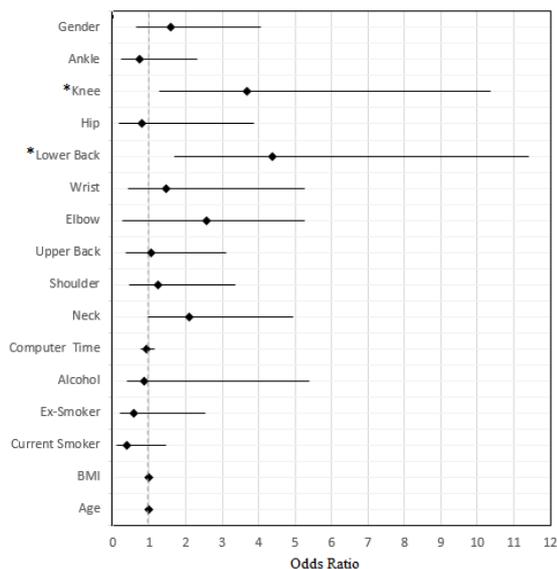


Figure 3. Predictors of poor sleep quality.

Binary logistic regression model dependent variable: poor sleep quality, good sleep quality. Graphic representation of odds ratio and relative 95% confidence intervals for each predictor: gender (reference: male), ankle pain (reference: yes), knee pain (reference: yes), hip pain (reference: yes), lower back pain (reference: yes), wrist pain (reference: yes), elbow pain (reference: yes), upper back pain (reference: yes), shoulder pain (reference: yes), neck pain (reference: yes), total time spent in front of the computer, alcohol, ex-smoker and current smoker (reference: non-smoker), BMI, age. * $p < 0.05$ statistically significant

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the participants with or without musculoskeletal pain

	Individuals without musculo-skeletal pain	Individuals with musculo-skeletal pain	Test
	n (%)	n (%)	
Gender	Female	3 (5.3)	54 (94.7)
	Male	28 (21.7)	101 (78.3)
			$\chi^2=7.695^*$ $p=0.003$
Educational status	Primary school	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)
	High school	0 (0.0)	17 (100.0)
	College	28 (18.9)	120 (81.1)
			$\chi^2=6.056^*$ $p=0.109$
Living place	Provincial central town	31 (17.0)	151 (83.0)
	District town	0 (0.0)	4 (100.0)
			$\chi^2=1.476^{**}$ $p=0.479$
Marital status	Married	25 (16.8)	124 (83.2)
	Single	6 (23.1)	20 (76.9)
	Widow/Divorced	0 (0.0)	11 (100.0)
			$\chi^2=2.971^*$ $p=0.226$
Smoking	Yes	8 (17.6)	52 (82.4)
	No	19 (13.3)	89 (86.7)
	Ex-smoker	4 (22.2)	14 (77.8)
			$\chi^2=0.947^*$ $p=0.623$
Alcohol consumption	Yes	3 (15.6)	4 (84.4)
	No	28 (42.9)	151 (57.1)
			$\chi^2=2.786^{**}$ $p=0.092$
Chronic disease	Yes	7 (17.1)	116 (82.9)
	No	24 (15.2)	39 (84.8)
			$\chi^2=0.092^*$ $p=0.761$
Physical activity	Yes	10 (20.8)	38 (79.2)
	No	21 (15.2)	117 (84.8)
			$\chi^2=0.809^*$ $p=0.369$
Poor sleep quality	Yes	12 (8.6)	127 (91.4)
	No	19 (40.4)	28 (59.6)
			$\chi^2=25.561^*$ $p=0.001$
Age (years) Mean \pm SD	44.16 \pm 9.12	42.79 \pm 8.40	$t= -0.561$ $p= 0.515$
BMI (kg/m ²) Mean \pm SD	26.17 \pm 3.72	26.43 \pm 3.84	$t= -0.814$ $p= 0.416$
Length of employment (years) Mean \pm SD	17.76 \pm 10.10	17.47 \pm 9.40	$t= -0.018$ $p=0.985$
Total time spent in front of the computer (hours) Mean \pm SD	6.54 \pm 2.17	7.13 \pm 1.95	$t= -1.259$ $p=0.258$
Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index Mean \pm SD	5.23 \pm 2.61	7.81 \pm 2.80	$t= -4.442$ $p=0.001$

*Chi-square test was used, **= Fisher's exact test, Student t test was used.

Table 2. PSQI scores based of the reported area of musculoskeletal pain

The area of the body for which musculoskeletal pain was reported	PSQI score (Mean ± SD)	Test	
Neck	Yes	7.82 ± 2.71	t = -2.086
	No	6.95 ± 3.08	p = 0.041
Shoulder	Yes	8.44 ± 2.82	t = -3.277
	No	6.93 ± 2.87	p = 0.001
Upper back	Yes	7.77 ± 2.62	t = -1.082
	No	7.24 ± 3.02	p = 0.281
Elbow	Yes	8.63 ± 2.18	t = -1.792
	No	7.26 ± 2.97	p = 0.075
Wrist	Yes	7.48 ± 2.23	t = -0.212
	No	7.36 ± 3.05	p = 0.736
Lower back	Yes	8.30 ± 2.62	t = -4.046
	No	6.62 ± 2.96	p = 0.001
Hip	Yes	8.37 ± 2.48	t = -1.918
	No	7.21 ± 2.97	p = 0.057
Knee	Yes	8.67 ± 2.67	t = -4.066
	No	6.83 ± 2.87	p = 0.001
Ankle	Yes	8.16 ± 2.73	t = -2.043
	No	7.13 ± 2.95	p = 0.042

Student t test was used.

Discussion

It was found that 83.3% of the individuals participating in the study (n:155) had MSP. Similarly, in a study evaluating the prevalence of MSD among 250 office workers at a university, it was found that 88.4% of office workers had MSD in the last 12 months (12). In a cross-sectional study evaluating bank officials in Kuwait, it was reported that 80% of the participants had MSD in the last 12 months (13). In another cross-sectional study in which 217 office workers were evaluated, the majority of the participants (71.9%) had work-related MSD (5). The view in the previous studies that the frequency of MSP is quite high among office workers was also supported by the present study. The increase in time spent on the computer, inappropriate monitor use and sitting positions, and low physical activity levels (6,14,15) of office workers are associated with an increase in musculoskeletal pain. Among office workers with a high incidence of MSD, driving factors such as ergonomics, duration of employment, time spent on the computer and physical activity level should be investigated and arrangements should be made to take necessary precautions.

In this study, the most common pain areas were neck (48.9%), lower back (45.2%), shoulder (29.6%), and knee (29.6%). Similarly, in a cross-sectional study investigating MSD and related factors among office workers in Iran, it was revealed that the most common areas of MSD were the neck (60.16%), lower back (57.10%) and shoulders (54.03%) (16). In the study conducted with office workers in Türkiye, the prevalence of pain was 67.85% for the neck, 66.33% for the upper back, and 59.49% for the lower back (17). The high frequency

of neck pain among office workers could be related to the time spent on the computer, the frequency of breaks, and the posture of workers during computer use (18). In contrast to the studies reporting that the most common pain area was the neck among office workers, one study reported that the most common pain area among office workers was the lower back (19). Computer users often need to maintain an upright posture that requires low-grade trunk muscle contraction, and this can cause lower back pain (20). Unlike other studies (17,21), no significant relationship was found between the time spent on the computer and pain. However, it is known that prolonged sitting can cause prolonged static contraction of the muscles and increase tension on ligaments and muscles and pressure on intervertebral discs (22). Therefore, besides the time spent on the computer, the time spent sitting at a desk, lack of breaks, inappropriate keyboard and monitor use and wrong sitting positions may also cause MSP. Among the individuals reporting MSP in our study, the number of those who performed physical activity was very low. In a systematic review and meta-analysis evaluating the effects of workplace physical activity programs on MSP, it was emphasized that physical activity significantly reduced MSP (23). Therefore, the presence of factors that can cause MSP among office workers should be determined, strategies to prevent pain formation should be developed, and education programs should be planned regarding break times, correct sitting positions, and physical activity benefits.

In the literature, it was reported that MSDs are more common among women (17). Similarly, MSP was more common among women in the present study. Thus, previous studies support our findings by reporting higher rates of MSD among women (17,24). Contrary to this finding, Omokhodion et al. (2003) reported higher work-related MSDs among men (25). This difference between the genders may be related to the fact that workplaces are more likely designed according to the male gender and to anthropometric differences between women and men (26,27). Another reason why women have specific musculoskeletal problems may be related to biology of the female gender. Men and women differ in body size, functional capacity, structure of muscle fibers, cardiovascular endurance and stress level. Endocrine effects, including menstruation, oral contraceptive use, pregnancy, and hysterectomy may increase the risk of musculoskeletal disorders among women (28). A study conducted in Nigeria found that women had the responsibility of managing the household and doing various household chores even after a busy day in the office, and possibly as a result of this, they were reported to be subjected to greater physical exertion, which could cause an increase in MSD (5). Female employees who reported discrimination or sexual harassment at workplace are on average less likely to report very good health than women workers who did not report being exposed to such psychosocial risk (29). Since the frequency of MSP is higher in women, especially female employees should be evaluated for the presence of MSP, physical

and psychosocial effects should be evaluated, and arrangements should be made for women in the working environment.

Individuals reporting MSP in the present study had higher PSQI scores and 81.9% had poor sleep quality. It was found that 74.7% of all employees with or without pain had poor sleep quality. In a study from Türkiye in which individuals working at a desk were evaluated, it was found that 54% of the employees had poor sleep quality (30). In another study evaluating the nutritional status and sleep quality of office workers, it was found that 34.4% of regular office workers and 40.6% of shift workers had poor sleep quality (31). In a study conducted with migrant workers in Myanmar, 62.5% of the workers had poor sleep (32). Considering other studies in the literature, the rate of individuals with poor sleep quality was quite high in our study population. Insufficient sleep was reported to have been associated with leading causes of death, including cerebrovascular disease, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and hypertension, malignant neoplasms, and occupational accidents (33). Therefore, it is necessary to identify individuals with poor sleep quality among university office workers, to examine the factors that may cause this, and to provide education on sleep.

Sleep quality is a crucial factor for health. Poor sleep quality can lead to MSP (34). Insufficient sleep can lead to an increase in both pain and fatigue (35). This is an interactive relationship. The presence of MSP is associated with shorter sleep hours and lower sleep quality (7). In this study, it was found that those who had pain in the shoulder, neck, lower back, knee, and ankle regions had a higher mean PSQI score than those who did not. In addition, it was found that the PSQI score increased as the number of pain regions increased. Logistic regression analysis revealed that poor sleep quality was associated with lower back and knee pain. Supporting this finding, a cross-sectional study evaluating individuals with chronic lower back pain found that the sleep quality of the group with lower back pain was lower (36). It is known that knee pain is also associated with poor sleep quality (37). In another study, a relationship was reported between pain in the upper back, shoulder, and toe joints and poor sleep quality, and the number of painful joints was associated with the total sleep quality score (38). The rate of poor sleep quality was found as 45.9% among individuals with MSP and 23.2% among those without MSP (7). Contrary to these studies, Katsifaraki et al. (2018) found no relationship between PSQI scores and pain. Even in that study, other sleep-related factors such as daytime sleepiness and insomnia were associated with MSD (39). MSP is associated with poor sleep quality. Poor sleep quality, in turn, can also make MSP worse. Sleep has a significant impact on mental health, social well-being and productivity as well as physical health in employees. In addition, insufficient sleep leads to loss of working hours, and insomnia can increase the number of accidents and mistakes in the workplace (40). The office workers who have MSP should be identified and these individuals should be

directed to treatment plans in order to provide quality sleep, which is very important for a healthy life, and to break the vicious cycle of sleep disorder-pain.

The study makes an important contribution to the literature in terms of the frequent sleep problems among office workers and the relationship between musculoskeletal pain and sleep problems. However, our study has some limitations. It was not possible to comment on whether the pain or the sleep disturbance was the cause or the result of the vicious circle between these two phenomena since it was planned as a cross-sectional study. In the future, a work plan can be made to evaluate the causality relationship between these two variables. Since the present study was performed on office workers, the results of the study cannot be generalized to other groups of employees. Another limitation was that the job descriptions of office workers were not questioned in detail. Finally, since the study subjects did not have any diagnosed psychiatric disorders, it could not be evaluated whether the sleep disorders were due to psychological reasons accompanied.

In conclusion, MSP is quite common among office workers, especially female employees. MSP is associated with poor sleep quality. Especially knee and lower back pain cause poor sleep quality. Health promotion practices should be planned to prevent MSP among office workers and to improve sleep quality, and employees with MSP should be directed to treatment. Future studies can be planned to investigate both physical and psychosocial factors that may cause sleep disorders in office workers.

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