

# Is Parental Functioning Associated with the Likelihood of Bed-Sharing?

## Background

- Creating safe infant sleep environments is vital.
- One component of the sleep environment is infant sleep location (e.g., crib versus adult bed).
- In a typical year, 629 infants died of accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed<sup>1</sup> and more than half of those who died from sudden infant death syndrome were bed-sharing at the time (the infant and adult slept on the same surface).<sup>2</sup>
- To enhance sleep-related infant death prevention efforts, factors associated with parental decisions to bed-share must be identified.
- In the Individual and Family Self-Management Theory (IFSMT)<sup>3</sup> health contexts, processes, and outcomes are interrelated, with changes in one affecting the entire system (see Figure 1).
- The IFSMT could be extended to infant sleep environments.
- Parental functioning (context) is one factor in IFSMT that may be specifically related to parental decisions regarding bed-sharing (proximal outcome), as it has already been linked to other parenting behaviors.<sup>6</sup>

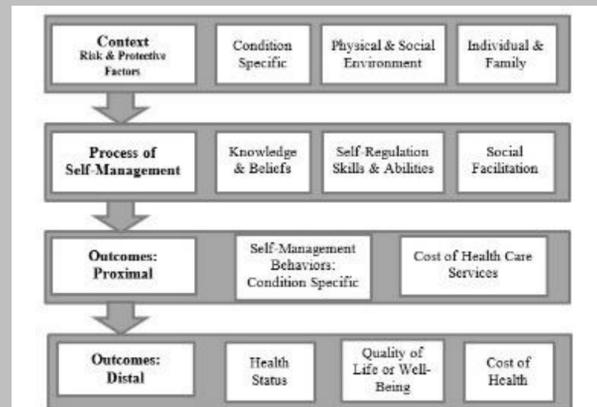


Figure 1. Model of the Individual and Family Self-Management Theory. Modified from Ryan & Sawin (2009) with permission.

## Aims

To explore the differences in current functioning between parents who bed-shared regularly (BSR; over 25 times) and those who never bed-shared (NBS) so as to better understand factors contributing to parental bed-sharing decisions.

## Methods

**Participants:** 420 parents participated, primarily mothers (78%), and the majority identified as Caucasian (85%), married (75%), and college educated (M=15.4 years).

**Procedure:** Parents were recruited from the community and completed an online survey with multiple measures.

## Measures & Analyses

**Background Information:** Participants reported their gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, education level, and number of children in their home and participants also reported their child's gender, age, and birth order.

**Bed-Sharing Behaviors:** Information was gathered on bed-sharing behaviors and frequency.

**PROMIS emotional distress and anxiety<sup>7</sup> (short form 7a):** 7 item scale indicating total level of emotional distress and anxiety. Higher scores indicate greater emotional distress and anxiety.

**Satisfaction with Life<sup>8</sup> (SWL):** 5 item scale indicating global quality of life and life satisfaction. Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction.

**Flourishing Scale<sup>9</sup>:** 8 item scale measuring success in multiple domains. Higher scores indicate higher overall well-being.

**Big Five Inventory-10<sup>10</sup>:** 10 item scale assessing the five major dimensions of personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness).

**Statistical Analyses:** Independent t-tests were run to identify differences between parents who bed-shared regularly and those who never bed-shared.

## Results

**Bed-Sharing Behaviors:** 30% of participants bed-shared regularly and 45% never bed-shared.

**PROMIS:** Parents who BSR had significantly higher levels of anxiety ( $t=2.04, p=.043$ ; see Figure 2).

**SWL:** Parents who BSR had significantly lower levels of current SWL ( $t=2.52, p=.012$ ).

**Flourishing Scale:** Although there were no significant differences in well-being, there was a trend toward lower well-being in those who bed-shared regularly ( $t=1.70, p=.090$ ).

**Big Five Inventory:** No differences in personality were found between the two groups.

## Conclusions

### Individual and Family Self-Management Theory Applied to Infant Sleep Environment

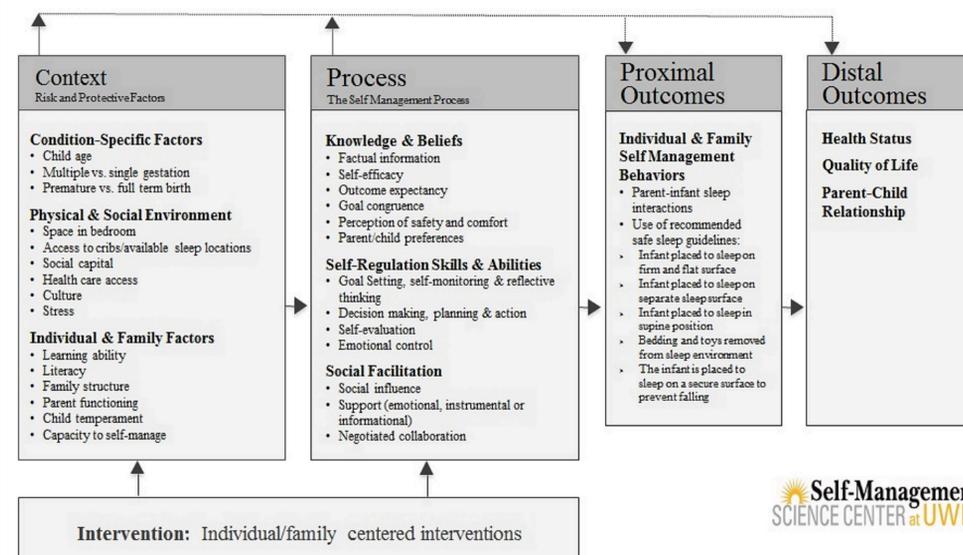


Figure 3. Model of Infant Sleep Environment. Adapted from "Individual and Family Self-Management Theory, by Ryan and Sawin, 2014, www.nursing.uwm.edu/smcc Copyright 2009, 2014 by Ryan and Sawin. Adapted with permission.

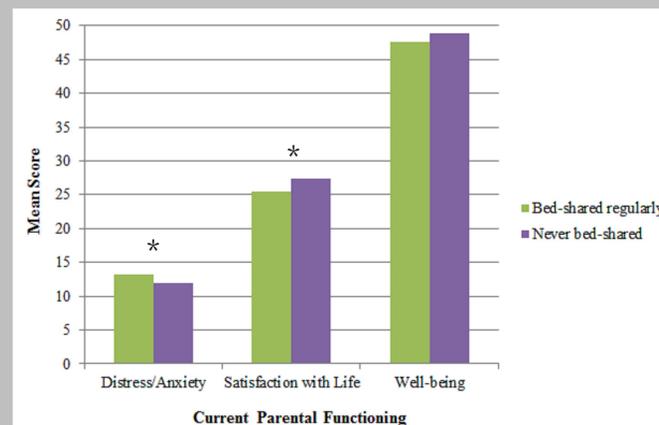


Figure 2. Mean scores of emotional distress and anxiety, satisfaction with life, and well-being between those who bed-shared regularly (over 25 times) and those who never bed-shared. \* =  $p < .05$

- Parents who bed-shared regularly were more likely to report poorer psychological functioning compared to parents who reported no history of bed-sharing.
- The associations found between parental functioning (context) and bed-sharing practices (a proximal outcome) suggest the IFSMT model may be applicable to infant sleep environments.
- A preliminary, adapted model of infant sleep environments is proposed in Figure 3.

- If this model fits well within an infant sleep environment framework, it may be helpful in understanding parental decisions regarding bed-sharing and other components of the infant's sleep environment.
- Greater understanding of this complex system is the first step in creating targeted interventions to reduce sleep-related infant death.
- Future research on the fit of this model to infant sleep environments should be prospective in nature and include a more diverse sample.

## References

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