

Sleep as Reflected in Self-Figure Drawings of Young Adolescents Living in Residential Care Facilities Compared to Those Living at Home

By: Naama Roth, MA, School of Art Therapy, University of Haifa.

Supervised by: Prof. Rachel Lev-Wiesel, School of Art Therapy, University of Haifa and Prof. Tamar Shochat, Department of Nursing, University of Haifa.

Sleep problems are common among adolescents, can affect different areas of functioning, and are often comorbid with emotional or developmental issues. Adolescents living in residential care facilities have a history of neglect, abuse, or other familial or environmental deficiencies, all of which may contribute to a higher risk of sleep problems. The purpose of this study was to explore sleep patterns and related behaviors of young adolescents living in residential care facilities, and to examine whether these patterns are reflected in their self-figure drawings and accompanying narrative descriptions.

This cross-sectional study compared young adolescents (ages 10-12) in residential care facilities (N=26) and in normative homes (N=33). Participants completed standard quantitative self-report (School Sleep Habits Survey) and objective (actigraphy) measurements of sleep patterns and related behaviors, and were asked to draw themselves sleeping and to describe their drawing. Drawings were analyzed using quantitative indicators of self-figure drawings and qualitative analysis of the narratives, performed by two independent raters.

Findings revealed that adolescents living in residential care facilities go to bed and rise earlier, sleep longer, and take longer to fall asleep, based on actigraphy and self-report ($p < 0.05$). No differences were found in sleep efficiency (actigraphy), related behaviors and mood (self-report). On examination, drawings demonstrated that young adolescents in residential care facilities frame their sleeping figure inside a closed boundary (88% vs 48.5%), and are more prone to use monochromatic colors (72% vs 45.5%) than their home residing counterparts. The qualitative analysis of the narratives found that they use themes of *exclusion*, that are expressed in the switching between grammatical persons (from 'I' sentences to 'he' or 'she' sentences) and expressions of self aggrandizing.

Findings suggest that adolescents in residential care facilities have difficulties falling asleep; however, it is likely that the structured environment enables good sleep hygiene and helps to prevent additional sleep problems. The need for protection and a sense of security are expressed in the drawings and the themes emerging from the narratives. This study offers a unique tool that may complement our understanding of adolescents' perception of their sleep.

Key words: young adolescents, sleep problems, self-figure drawing, residential care facilities.

Corresponding author: Naama Roth, Email: Naamabet@gmail.com