Sleep behaviours in PT LBW infants may be an early developmental domain in which a child’s attachment to the parent affects the quality of their sleep and the family’s sleep. This study explored the association between early infant sleep (measured at 4 months postterm) and toddler self-regulation and behavior problems at 24 months postterm. The study used a longitudinal design with a sample of 105 preterm and low birthweight infants who were followed from birth to 24 months of age. The research questions addressed the relationship between early sleep patterns and toddler self-regulation and behavior problems. The study found that infant sleep patterns between 4 and 9 months postterm were not associated with toddler self-regulation. However, maternal perceptions of infant sleep habits at 4 months postterm predicted toddler self-regulation and behavior problems at 24 months postterm.

The study measured infant sleep patterns and maternal sleep perceptions using a semi-structured interview. Toddler self-regulation was assessed using the Walk-a-Line-Slowly task and the Gift-in-Bag task. The Walk-a-Line-Slowly task measured the number of seconds the child took to complete the task. The Gift-in-Bag task measured the child’s ability to delay gratification.

The study found that mothers who felt that their 4 month old infants needed someone present to fall asleep had children who scored higher on the Walk-a-Line-Slowly task and the Gift-in-Bag task at 24 months postterm. This suggests that early infant sleep and maternal sleep perceptions may be important factors in the development of toddler self-regulation and behavior problems.

The study also found that maternal perceptions of needing someone present to fall asleep at 4 months postterm predicted toddler self-regulation and behavior problems at 24 months postterm. This suggests that maternal perceptions of sleep may have a long-term impact on child development.

The study concluded that early infant sleep patterns and maternal sleep perceptions are important factors in the development of toddler self-regulation and behavior problems. Further research is needed to understand the mechanisms underlying these relationships and to develop interventions to improve early infant sleep and maternal sleep perceptions in PT LBW infants.