

## Effects of Parental Involvement and Marital Relationships on Young Adult Daughters' Well-being

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### Abstract

Parental involvement and parents' marital relationships are strongly related to the well-being of children. Samples used in previous studies have generally been limited to families that have young children. As the number of people who receive higher education increases, many young adult children are depending on their parents for longer period of time. It can be assumed that many parents still have an impact on the well-being of their young adult children. This research investigated the types of parental involvement associated with the well-being of young adult daughters and how parents' marital relationships influenced this well-being. In study 1, a questionnaire survey was conducted with 153 couples and their daughters (age range = 17 - 28 years, mean = 22.3, SD = 2.2). The results suggested that parental involvement was associated with the well-being of the daughters. They also indicated that the stronger a mother's trust in the father, the more positive the perception of parental involvement by the daughter. This suggested that a daughters' perception of her father was influenced by her mother's evaluation of the marital relationship. It is assumed that mothers tend to mediate between fathers and daughters. In study 2, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine young adult daughters to investigate the types of parental involvement that had an impact on them. Two important results were obtained. First, paternal involvement that had an impact on daughters can be largely divided into respecting their autonomy, and cherishing them and their mothers. Second, maternal involvement that had an impact on daughters can be largely divided into taking the daughter's side at any time, and caring for them daily. These results have several implications for parent-young adult daughter relationship.

**Key words:** parental involvement, marital relationship, young adult daughters, questionnaire, interview

### Introduction

Many researchers have noted that marital relationships of parents and parental involvement influence the well-being of children. It is unknown how long marital relationships and parenting have effects on the well-being of young adults. In Japan, many young people are living with their parents longer than before to pursue higher education and marriage later in life. Therefore, their well-being is influenced by their parents more than before. There have been few studies examining how parents influenced the well-being of their young adult children. Furthermore, young adult daughters tend to live with their parents longer than young adults sons. More Japanese parents are beginning to prefer female rather than male children, because they believe these children will care for them in future. Although young adult daughters are generally well loved, it is difficult for them to live independently from their parents. Sometimes, these women feel forced to fulfill the expectations of their

parents, especially those of their mother. The goals of this study were to examine how parents affect their young adult daughters, and how parents' marital relationships affect parenting and daughters. Do parents continue to influence their young adult daughters? What types of parental involvement have influence? How does parents' marital relationships relate to the well-beings of these daughters? These are the questions addressed in this study.

### Literature Review

#### Parents' marital relationships and young adult daughters

The marital relationships of parents have an effect on the well-being of children. Cui, Lorenz, & Conger (2005) stress that marital discord is negatively associated with this well-being. Utsunomiya (2005) found that young women who recognized their parents as having a positive relationship are more likely to have low anxiety than other young women.

Emery, Fincham, & Cummings (1992) note that parents'

marital relationship affects children's development in two ways. The first is direct. For example, children are directly exposed to marital conflicts. The second is indirect. This means that marital conflicts reduce the quality of parental involvement, and that low-quality parenting leads to a decreased sense of well-being. Several meta-analytic studies support the latter one (e.g., Erel & Burman, 1995). The results of many pieces of research suggest that parents' marital relationship influences the well-being of children through parenting.

A father's involvement in childcare is more likely to be affected by the marital relationship than that of the mother's. Owen & Cox (1997) revealed that marital conflict is negatively associated with father-child attachment. Kitzmann (2000) reported that a father's involvement in childcare decreased after marital conflict.

Mothers seem to be gatekeepers who exclude their partners from their home and children after marital conflict. This is why mothers are likely to be mediators in father-child relationships (Lynn, 1976). Lamb (1986) reported that a father's motivation is increased when their partner encourages them to get involved in childcare. This indicates that wives who value their husbands' childcare skills encourage them to get involved.

Mothers also influence father-child relationships through the children. Ishii-Kuntz (1994) reported that, although Japanese fathers were frequently absent from home, their children had positive images of them, because their mothers depicted them as authoritative and diligent at work.

Daughters are more likely to be influenced by mothers. Young adult daughters who perceive their mothers as satisfied with their marital relationships were likely to see their fathers in a positive light (Onodera, 1984). It can be assumed that daughters tend to perceive their fathers through their mothers' images of the fathers. This study, hence, focuses on how mothers' influence their daughters' images of their fathers.

### Parental involvement in young adult children's lives

Parental involvement in children is strongly related to their well-being. Baumrind (1991) suggested four types of parental attitudes—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting—by two dimension: responsiveness and demandingness. Adolescents of authoritative parents were most likely to be highly competent, sociable, and self-assertive (Baumrind, 1991).

Much attention has been paid to fathers' involvement in childcare. Many researchers have noted that this involvement promotes children's developments of self-esteem, sociability, and morality (e.g., Mosley & Thompson, 1995 and Kosterman, Haggerty, Spoth, & Redmond, 2004). Flouri & Buchanan (2002) revealed that marital adjustment of children at age 33 was related to good relationships with mother and father at age 16 in

their longitudinal study. It can be assumed that fathers' involvement in young adults' lives is important, because young adults frequently try to discover their occupational identity, and most of their fathers already have a stable occupation. Parents retain primary influence over their adolescent children on major life decisions regarding values, goals, and future decisions (Berndt, 1982). Furthermore, some researchers reported that a close relationship with parents is necessary for young adults to become independent (Santrock, 2003; Hiraishi, 2006). Cooper, Grotevant, and Condon (1983) suggested that the process of adolescents leaving the home is facilitated by individuated family relationships, and characterized by separateness. This gives the adolescent permission to develop his or her own point of view, in the context of connectedness, and provides a secure base from which the adolescent can explore worlds outside the family. Few studies have examined the relationship between parental involvement and the well-being of young adult children.

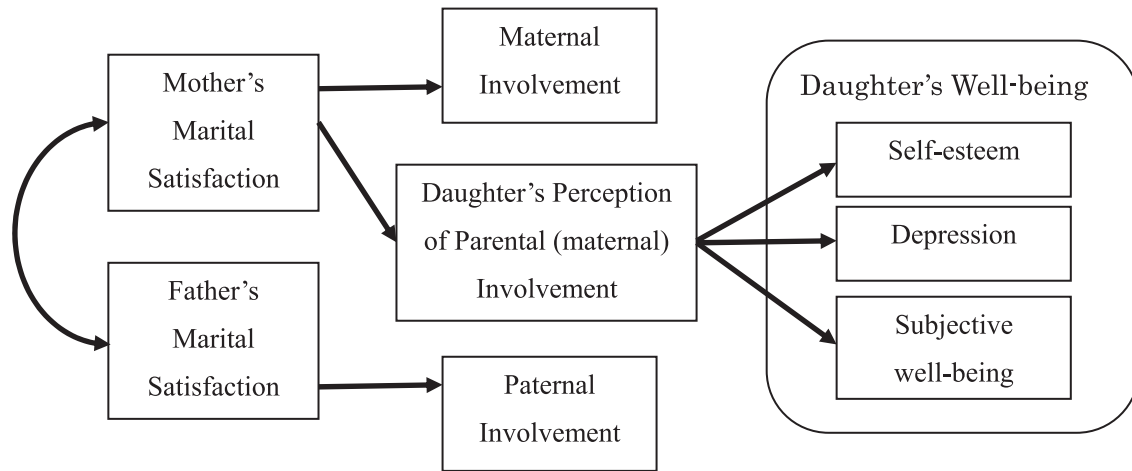
First, this study examines how parents' marital relationships influence parental involvement and the well-being of young adult daughters by focusing on the marital satisfaction of mothers. Figure 1 represents my conceptual model of the relationship between the relation of parents, parenting, and the well-being of young adult daughters. On the basis of previous findings, I assumed that a mother's marital satisfaction was associated with that of a father's. A mother's marital satisfaction was assumed to influence maternal involvement. A father's marital satisfaction was also assumed to influence paternal involvement. It was speculated that a mother's and father's involvement influences a daughter's perception of parental involvement, and that a daughter's perception of parental involvement affects her own well-being. Second, interview data on young adult daughters were analyzed to investigate what type of parenting stands out in young adult daughters' memory. This analysis leads to an understanding of meaningful parenting and offers us suggestions about parenting.

## Study 1

### Method

#### Sample

Data used for this study were collected from a sample of 155 Japanese young female adults, ranging in age from 17 to 28 (mean = 22.3), and their parents, ranging in age from their 40's to 60's. Of the young female adults, 122 were students, including 2 high school students, 72 were undergraduate students, 46 were graduate students, and 2 were preparatory students, and 31 were employees. Their parents were asked to state their generation. Of



**Figure 1** Conceptual model of parents' marital relationship, parental involvement, and daughter's well-being

the fathers, 24 were in their 40's, 107 were in their 50's, 10 were in their 60's, and 12 were unknown. Of the mothers, 43 were in their 40's, 100 were in their 50's, 2 were in their 60's, and 8 were unknown.

Sample recruitment began at several universities in Tokyo. There were many students from different parts of Japan, so it was possible to collect samples from students that were from a variety of areas. Questionnaires were distributed to the students after class, and students were asked to respond and hand over additional questionnaires to their parents. There were three questionnaires—one for students, one for fathers, and one for mothers—and three envelopes to protect privacy. I also handed out questionnaires to my friends and acquaintances that were appropriate as samples for this study, and asked them to hand out others. The effective response rate (three matching data available in the collected data) was 84 %.

## Measures

### 1. Questions for parents

**Marital relationship.** Several existent measures (Moroi, 1996; Sugawara & Takuma, 1997; Sugawara et al, 1999) were used to assess the marital relationships of parents. For this study, 22 variables from these measures were selected by factor analysis. For example, "I love my husband /wife so much," and "I am happy about my relationship with my husband/wife." Each variable was evaluated from "I never think so" to "I strongly think so." A marital relationship scale was created by summing 22 items yielding  $\alpha = .96$  for this sample. A high score indicated a satisfactory marital relationship.

**Supportive parental involvement.** An existent measure of social support (Hisada, Senda, Minokuchi, 1989) for use with students was altered use with for parents. For example, "Your parents encourage you when you are depressed." was changed to "I encourage my children

when they are depressed." The scale was composited of 16 variables asking parents about their support for their children, ranging from "never do" to "do." A high score indicated a high level of supportive parental involvement. This scale yielded  $\alpha = .89$  for fathers,  $\alpha = .91$  for mothers.

### 2. Questions for young adult daughters

**Psychological well-being.** I measured the well-being of young adult daughters using three variables: self-esteem, degree of depression, and subjective well-being. Self-esteem was measured with a self-esteem questionnaire (Tanaka, 2005) based on Rosenberg's self-esteem inventory (Rosenberg, 1965). This questionnaire included nine items that were rated on a 4-point Likert scales. A higher score indicated a high level of self-esteem and psychological well-being. This scale yielded  $\alpha = .87$ .

I used the Japanese version of the self-rating depression scale (Zung, 1965 and Fukuda & Kobayashi, 1983) to measure depression. The questionnaire included 20 items that ranged from "never or occasionally" to "always." A high score indicate a high level of depression and a low level of psychological well-being. This scale yielded  $\alpha = .80$ .

Subjective well-being was assessed with the Japanese version of the subjective well-being inventory (Sell & Nagpal, 1992 and Ito et al, 2003) that included 20 items concerning feelings of contentment in family, work, and life. The scale was rated on a 4-point Likert scale, and yielded  $\alpha = .87$ .

**Supportive parental involvement.** Young adult daughters were asked to rate their parents' supportive involvement with a social support questionnaire (Hisada, Senda, Minokuchi, 1989). This scale ranged from "my father/mother never do" to "my father /mother do" and yielded  $\alpha = .91$  for both fathers and mothers.

## Analyses

Path analysis was used for all model analyses. Factor analysis (for the marital relationship scale) and principal component analysis (for the other scales) were performed as a first step to determine the adequacy of factor loadings. Following this analysis, I checked the correlation of all variables, and tested theoretical models that included data on young adult daughters and their parents. An overall model fit was assessed by examining a goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Finally, a multi-regression analysis was used to examine what types of parental involvement influence young adult daughters.

## Results

I conducted a factor analysis using the marital relationship scale. The scale was a combination of several existent scales. Twenty-two items loading over .50 on the first factor were identified by factor analysis. The other scales were used to check the adequacy of the factor loadings by principal component analysis, and all items of these scales were loaded over .40 on the first factor.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Respondents	Variables	M	SD
Father	Marital relationship	3.17	0.57
	Supportive parental involvement	3.15	0.43
Mother	Marital relationship	3.03	0.64
	Supportive parental involvement	3.36	0.39
Daughter	Involvement from father	3.12	0.56
	Involvement from mother	3.18	0.55
	Self-esteem	2.96	0.50
	Depression	2.07	0.42
	Subjective well-being	2.90	0.42

**Table 2** Intercorrelations of variables

Respondents	Variables	Father's marital satisfaction	Mother's marital satisfaction	Paternal involvement	Maternal involvement	Self-esteem	Depression	Subjective well-being	Paternal involvement (daughter)	Maternal involvement (daughter)
Parents	Father's marital satisfaction	-	.54 ***	.54 ***	.21	.19 *	-.19 *	.16	.15	.15
	Mother's marital satisfaction		-	.23 **	.35 ***	.10	-.14	.17	.34 ***	.31 ***
	Paternal involvement			-	.23 **	.12	-.12	.10	.17 *	.14
	Maternal involvement				-	.08	-.13	.19 *	.21 **	.15
Daughters	Self-esteem					-	-.73 ***	.74 ***	.27 ***	.36 ***
	Depression						-	-.65 ***	-.26 **	-.33 ***
	Subjective well-being							-	.38 ***	.42 ***
	Paternal involvement								-	.91 ***
	Maternal involvement									-

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

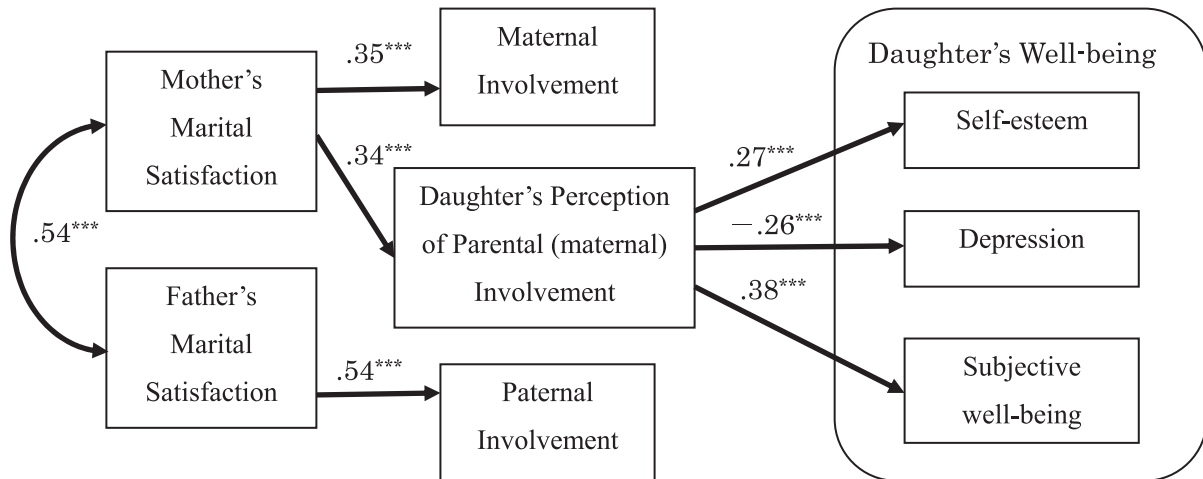
Therefore I used all the items of these scales for the analyses.

The means and standard deviations of all variables are shown in Table1. Each item was evaluated by using four options. Table 1 indicates that the parents of this study were likely to be satisfied with their marital relationships, support their daughters frequently, and have daughters who tended to have a high sense of well-being.

Factor correlations are shown in Table 2. Marital satisfaction of fathers correlated with that of mothers ( $r = .54$ ). The more satisfied mothers were with their marital relationship, the more support their young adult daughters felt from their fathers ( $r = .34$ ) and mothers ( $r = .31$ ). Daughters who felt frequent support from their parents had high self-esteem ( $r = .27$ ), less depression ( $r = -.26$ ), and a high subjective well-being ( $r = .38$ ).

### Path model.

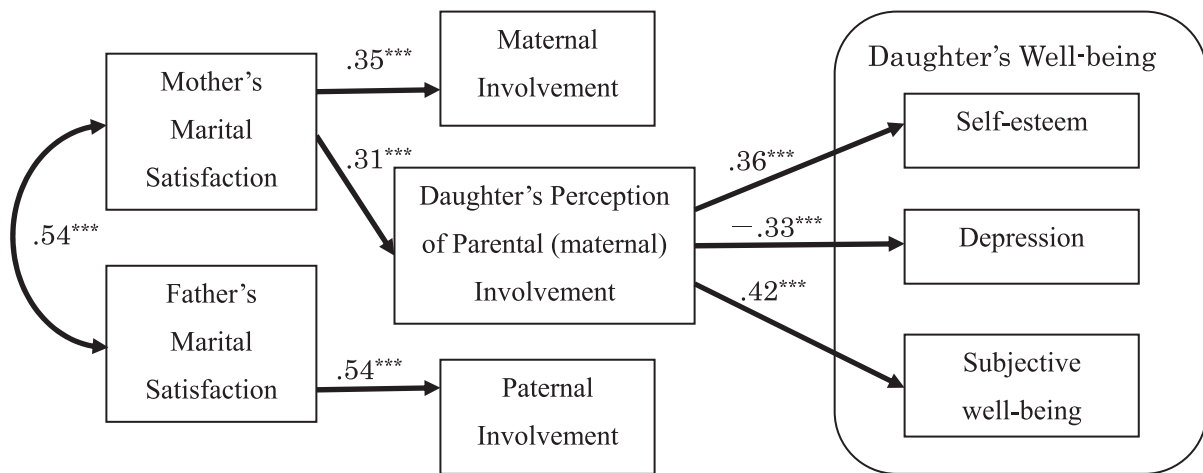
There was a high correlation between daughters' evaluation of paternal and maternal involvement. Therefore, I included these two variables as independently in a path model. In the case of including the daughters' evaluation of paternal involvement (figure2), the more satisfied mothers were with their marital relationships, the more support their young adult daughters felt from their fathers ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Mothers having high levels of affection for their husbands supported their daughters frequently ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Fathers having high levels of affection for their wives also supported their daughters frequently ( $\beta = .54$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Daughters who felt frequent support from their fathers had high self-esteem ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ), less depression ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and a high subjective well-being ( $\beta = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This proposed model yielded GFI=.968, AGFI=.935, RMSEA=.030. Figures show that this model fits the sample data reasonably well.



**Figure 2** Path model of parent's marital relationship, parental involvement, and daughter's well-being in relations to daughter's perception of paternal involvement

In the case of the daughters' evaluation of maternal involvement (figure3), the more satisfied mothers were with their marital relationships, the more support their young adult daughters felt from them ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Daughters who felt frequent support from their mothers

had high self-esteem ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $p < .001$ ), less depression ( $\beta = -.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and a high subjective well-being ( $\beta = .42$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This proposed model yielded GFI = .970, AGFI = .941, and RMSEA = .018. These figures show that this model fits the sample data reasonably well.



**Figure 3** Path model about parent's marital relationship, parental involvement, and daughter's well-being in relations to daughter's perception of maternal involvement

## Study 2

### Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine young adult daughters to investigate what types of parental involvement had had an impact on them. Table 3 presents the major characteristics of the daughters in the sample. I conducted the interviews at my university and in restaurants. The daughters lived in Tokyo and decided where they wanted to meet. I explained the

object of the research, the confidentiality obligation, and their right to refuse answering. The interviews were conducted between June and November of 2008.

Each interview was conducted using a common protocol of open-ended questions that were focused on how parents make their daughters happy, the types of parental involvement the daughters emulate, and the things for which the daughters appreciate their parents. The interviews lasted from 30 to 90 min and were tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed and coded using the MAXQDA software.

Table 3 Sample characteristics

Assigned Name	Age	Occupation	Lives With or Without Parents	Family Structure
Goto	21	University student	Without	Father, Mother, Older Brother
Ichida	22	Graduate student	Without	Father, Mother, Older Sister
Ikuta	26	Clerk	With	Father, Mother, Younger Sister and Brother
Isomi	23	University student	Without	Father, Mother
Kusumi	27	Graduate student	Without	Mother, Older Sister (Father Died 1 Year Ago)
Miyama	23	Graduate student	With	Father, Mother, Older Sister
Rokkaku	21	University student	With	Father, Mother, Younger Sister
Shioya	23	Graduate student	Without	Father, Mother, Younger Sister and Brother
Towada	20	University student	Without	Father, Mother, Older Sister

## Results

I examined the many types of parental involvement that had an impact on the daughters. I examined paternal and maternal involvement separately. The types of paternal involvement that had had an impact on the daughters can be largely divided into respecting the autonomy of the daughters and cherishing them and their mothers.

### *Respecting the autonomy of the daughters*

An important part of paternal involvement for daughters is that their fathers respect their autonomy. Respecting autonomy means that the fathers' recognizing their daughters as adults with independence. Many of the daughters appreciated their fathers for approving their future life decisions. Ms. Miyama talked about her gratitude for her father:

*I thank my father for watching me warmly .He isn't overbearing and doesn't tell me what to do and what not to do. Therefore, I lived freely and easily. . . .It could be perceived as unconcern, but he really isn't one to say things. . . .For example, when I was so anxious and worry about an entrance examination, my mother worried about me and expressed this worries to me. I could feel as if my father were saying "take it easy," although he didn't actually say anything at all. I felt that he is thinking these types of things, and that he is watching over me.*

Some daughters said that praise from their fathers made them feel that they were recognized as independent individuals. Others said that they became aware of their responsibility for their own lives because their fathers brought them up as individuals with autonomy.

### *Cherishing them and their mothers*

Another part of paternal involvement for daughters is that fathers cherish them and their mothers. Cherishing

means spending time with them (playing and traveling) and being willing to offer consultation. Ms. Rokkaku talked about how her fathers' cherished her:

*When I was a first grade student, I went into the hospital for an operation. My father visited me every day. Since I was so lonely for from the solitude, I appreciated that my family came to see me.*

Cherishing their mothers means that fathers care about their wives. Most of the daughters stated that they respected their fathers for caring for their mothers. If their fathers took care of and had a good relationship with their wives, the daughters respected them. Fathers' cherishing their family will lead to a model of parenting for the daughters. When asked what she emulated in her father, Ms. Towada stated:

*All in all, I want to be a parent who cherishes the family no matter how busy I am.*

When the daughters noticed their fathers' attention to them and their mother, they felt happy. That will affect the daughters' parenting in next generations.

Second, the type of maternal involvement that had an impact on the daughters can be largely divided into taking the daughters' side at any time and caring for them daily.

### *Taking the daughters' side at any time*

Mothers taking the daughters' side at any time had had a great impact on their daughters. The mothers often noticed and pointed out favorable characteristics in the daughters and gave them priority. For example, Ms. Ichida talked about how her mother took her side every time:

*When I was a kindergartner, I had an opportunity to send my mother a colored paper in the shape of a*



*flower. I colored each petal with a different color. Then my friend said there are no rainbow-colored flowers, so I felt very sad. I tried to color each petal with a single color, but they became black. When I sent my mother this flower saying I'm sorry, my mother displayed it saying that there are black flowers. I don't think there are black flowers, but I was very glad that she supported me. This episode is representative of that support.*

Mothers taking their daughters side was associated with the self-confidence of the daughters. When the mothers did this, the daughters felt that their existence had meaning.

#### *Caring for the daughters daily*

Driving the daughters to schools, cooking, and taking care of them when they are sick are classified as daily care. This concept also involves mental care such as listening to and encouraging the daughters. For example, Ms Isomi talked about what she wanted to imitate in her mother:

*My mother took care of domestic affairs no matter how busy she is as well. I would like to do so. Although my mother doesn't work every day, when she was busy preparing handouts for a seminar, she made a boxed lunch for me...I want to take care of domestic affairs whenever I am busy just like that.*

This daily care from the mothers provided the daughters with a sense of ease and a model of motherhood. When the daughters became adults, they noticed the countless way their mothers cared for them daily.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The results of this study were twofold. The first was to investigate how parents' marital relationship influenced the well-being of young adult daughters, and the second was to examine what types of parental involvement are important to them.

First, the results of this study indicated that the more satisfied parents were with their marital relationships, the more support they gave to their daughters. Therefore, marital satisfaction was important for parenting. Furthermore, marital relationships influenced the well-being of daughters indirectly. The satisfaction of mothers in marriage was associated with a more positive perception of the parents' involvement by their daughters. The more positive the perception, the higher the well-being of the young adult daughters. This suggests that a young adult daughter's perception of her fathers is influenced by how her mother evaluates the marital relationship. Therefore, it is assumed that

mothers tend to mediate between their husbands and daughters.

In contrast to the mother's evaluation of the marital relationships, the father's evaluation did not affect the daughter's perception of parental involvement. There are two reasons for this. One reason is the amount of time spent with children. Generally, mothers have more opportunities to interact with their children than fathers (SomusyoTokeikyoku, 2006). Therefore, fathers miss chances to engage in their children's lives. The second reason is the gender difference. Mothers often talk about their partners with their daughters (Ishii-Kuntz, 1994), and daughters also tend to perceive their parents' marital relationships from their mother's side (Moroi, 1997).

Second, it was found that parental involvement was associated with the well-being of daughters even when they became young adults. Parental involvement was not associated with their perception of parental involvement. Daughters evaluated maternal involvement less than mothers, though they evaluated paternal involvement more than fathers. It can be assumed that young adult daughters' perceptions were affected by the mother's perception of the marital relationships and present parent-child relationships. The daughters' perception of parental involvement influenced their well-being. How daughters perceived parental involvement was more important than how parents do.

The results of study revealed the types of parental involvement that had had an impact on young adult daughters. Types of paternal involvement that had had an impact on the daughters involved respecting their autonomy and cherishing them and their mothers. These involvements lead the daughters to have a high sense of well-being. In particular, respecting the autonomy of the daughters encouraged them to be independent. Furthermore, fathers' cherishing mothers was important to the daughters. It is speculated that daughters have a tendency to identify with their mothers.

Types of maternal involvements that had had an impact on daughters involved taking the daughters' side at any time and taking care of them daily. It was important to the daughters that their mothers continued to support them because it deeply fostered their self-esteem. Daily physical and mental cares from mothers also provided the daughters with peace of mind. This lead to low depression and high subjective well-being.

There are several limitations to this study. For example, most of the parents who participated in this study were content with their marital relationships. These findings, therefore, are generalized only to those parents. Additionally, this study did not include young adult sons. Therefore the conceptual model should be tested more comprehensively and then elaborated on in the future. It also did not include many other variables involved in parents' marital and parent-young adult

relationships. For example, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and friends also influence the well-being of parents and their daughters. Despite these data limitations, the findings of this study should scholarship on Japanese parent-young adult children relationships, about which little is known.

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